

Back & Forth

Graffiti 81-120 from

Gordon 'Wills' Prestoungrange



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For many, many colleagues over the past decade and more and in particular for those who have grasped the baton especially Richard, Eric, Carol and Sylvia; and as always for Avril who censored me and the script and checked the proofs; and for Mathew and Julian who after their university and professional training and development enlisted for better for worse ...

Back & Forth

by Gordon Prestoungrange

Abstract:

This book describes and reflects on the national cartelisation of tertiary education and the deleterious global impact it has on lifelong provision for professionals. The author has been a participant observer in the area throughout the past 40 years and this is his third collection of commentaries, which he calls graffiti, on issues that have shaped his working life and its broader environment. In particular this collection numbered 81–120 encompasses the arrival and deployment of the Internet for global education.

He discusses the challenges of passing on leadership to others whilst still active himself and demonstrates the merits of distraction into other fields as a fine way to let successors flourish whilst still being available as a mentor to them.

Keywords:

Business schools, International management development, Action Learning, Lifelong learning, Web based education, Scottish feudalism, Murals

By Way of Explanation

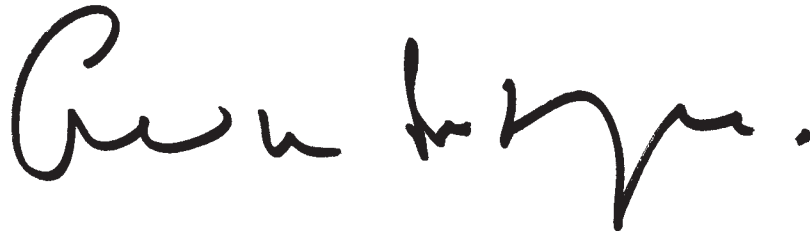
Back & Forth does I hope stand as a collection of reflections and conclusions arising that has relevance for all today's readers. However, as my long suffering colleagues will know, it is deliberately positioned as my third and *maybe* final collection of graffiti.

In 1976 and again in 1988 I put pen to paper to create what were billed as decennial transcripts of life in the British Business School movement that began its journey in the 1960s in the wake of The Franks' Report. Each such collection consisted of 40 graffiti, a construct taken from another author's dust jacket in the personal library of the University of Tulsa professor in whose home we were lodged in 1976. 40 seemed a suitable number with its biblical associations, and it stuck. Those first two were called *Business School Graffiti* and *Creating Wealth through Management Development*. (For those who want copies they are now downloadable on the Internet at www.prestoungrange.org). Both were in-house publications from MCB University Press with which I had such a wondrous de facto/de jure association from 1963 until 1998. They sold to those I really expected to reach but were scarcely best sellers. But this never deterred me because as my good friends Alan Mumford and Richard Teare have repeatedly informed me, they are my Learning Log. They both greatly approve of such an activity from one who is primarily a pragmatic activist.

The whole sequence has of course been totally egotistical. It cannot stand as an objective historical document about the Rise and Fall of British Business Schools, although it spans that epoch. In the first volume, as I re-read it now, it is clear that I was already coming adrift from the politically correct approach to education and development for professionals and managers. Volume two showed my reflective self taking me yet further away and now this final volume depicts me and the Armada wholly at sea! But I am in no way disappointed with that reflection on my working life. Not at all. Cartels need dissidents and it has been my privilege and enjoyment to be one such. My chosen profession of marketing research has consistently reported to me that the cartel survives solely because it keeps dissenters at bay, whilst patronising their ideas. The true customers are not fooled they are simply monumentally disadvantaged. And along my path of dissent I have been accompanied by so many brilliant scholars and successful practitioners that I know I have not been wholly deluded.

As in all previous graffiti it has been a case of 'no names no pack drill'. Save on very rare occasions none of our collective dissent has been a personal issue, rather it has been a matter of professional disagreement or lack of entrepreneurial courage. Protagonists will readily be able to recognise themselves but that's no bad thing perhaps. Some but not all of them figure in the selection of photographs Avril and I were able to amass in the work we have addressed.

Finally, although I forsook the surname Wills when I became the Scottish Baron of Prestoungrange in 1998, I have kept it in my by-line to give continuity with the earlier two books.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Wills', with a period at the end. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Victoria, British Columbia

A Dedication

I have for several years wished to dedicate this third volume of Graffiti to Peter Watson for two special reasons. Firstly, throughout his tenure of Pro- and Deputy roles in the Vice Chancellor's office at the University of Buckingham he demonstrated consistent support for our approaches to professional development and, when he took early retirement, he willingly joined our own Faculty to make a distinguished and frequently wise contribution. Secondly, because he more than any other implicitly complimented me in my work by frequently reciting in debate and discourse the potted learning recorded in the first two volumes.

When asked if a Dedication to him might be in order he was honest enough to assume that it was probably a punishment to fit some crime which he inwardly knows he has committed of which I am as yet unaware. But the truth will out I am sure.

Sincere thanks for really quite a lot Peter – a friend indeed.

A Tribute

This volume appears just three months after the death of Reg Revans, father of Action Learning, and a very great inspiration to me and my colleagues for the past 25 years. His disciples, many of whom work in the organisations with which I have been so deeply involved since 1982, can be found across the globe. His work will be continued into the future in the certain belief that action learning is one of the most powerful ways to engender and sustain adult learning.

Thank you to Reg.

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The Armada is Still at Sea

Sir Francis Drake is reported to have observed in 1587 after his sea victory over the Spanish at Cadiz that “*there must be a begynnyng of any great matter but the contenewing unto the end untill it be thoroughly ffynshed yeldes the trew glory*”. And so, after completing his legendary leisurely game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe in 1588 he set sail to harass the Armada up the English Channel. He then played a modest part alongside the Lord High Admiral off Calais because he had the imagination and skills to send fireships amongst the Spanish that split then panicked their fleet. They fled up the North Sea and alas many were wrecked on the Scottish and Irish coasts as they sought their way home by that long route.

The tale could of course be told another way around, showing how the great matter in hand was the King of Spain’s attempt to restore a Catholic monarch to the throne of England; and that Drake was but one leader amongst many of the English side who were on the defensive against the great matter in hand. But that game of bowls has held the imagination of us all down the years. Such a simple incident, which I gather in any event was a reflection on the weather and the tides rather than the insouciance implied.

Which goes to show does it not that what we believe is history in reality depends on who told it and who had the best peg to hang their story on. This third Graffiti collection is clearly no exception.

I am writing here some thirty six years after I became a university teacher in Bradford West Yorkshire, and twenty five years after I penned the original *Business School Graffiti* 1–40, beginning with *Lord Franks and All That*. Lord Who you might ask today... but he prescribed well for Britain’s Business Schools even though they chose to ignore the substance of much of what he said. He was asked in the early 1960s to arbitrate on where the UK should locate two new great Schools for educating managers, for which industry was willing to offer major financial support, and what they should do.

The intervening years have seen this great matter continued but not in any way brought to a conclusion where any true glory may be found. There are but few big ships wrecked around the coastline of the nation. The wrecks are of those who sought to challenge. The

universities which Lord Franks (and I also) so unwisely believed would honour the purposes of management education have instead taken them prisoner. Within the universities the Business Schools have themselves proceeded to create their own further cartelisation structures.

The manner in which the Universities' Armada sails on is enshrined in the laws of the land. To challenge them has since 1988 become a criminal offence in Britain and in Ontario Canada it was thus elevated in 2000. What is it that they so fear? Is it fear of fireships or do they truly see a threat to their established ways, to their established professionalism?

Perhaps the most distressing fact is that it is normally a thoughtless or at best pragmatic process that drives them. There is no ferment of debate within most of the University world about how best to teach, or how best adults can learn. And seldom if ever is that debate driven from an understanding of the body of knowledge on the matter. The Universities stand indicted by failure on the very criteria they use to judge their own students. As institutions they seldom seem to know what is known about how we learn, and where some members surely do they do not take their counsel. They proceed in ignorance of most of the body of knowledge about management in general even though they teach it extensively to undergraduates and postgraduates in their millions. They treat the body of knowledge about the management of innovation with the same cavalier attitude they treat management in general.

How can this be so, how can this continue not only to be tolerated but reinforced yet further?

I do not think the answer lies in the particular. It lies in society's educational 'cringe', as an Australian might phrase it. Education is seen as the key to better economic opportunities in life by the great majority, and as a means for self actualisation. For undergraduate students the campus where we congregate is the cauldron of ideas and argument as we grow away from family values and ties into immature adulthood. It can and does indeed deliver these benefits often as a right and with great assistance to the individual financially from society at large.

University education today is seen as a social service, and the provider is the State, which does so on a massive scale. Politically the clamour for education from society prevents any serious endeavour to limit supply. Rightly it wants to ensure the best return for its expenditure

against a bewildering array of objectives. So far so good, but society then turns to the University profession itself, meaning the Faculty, for guidance on how to conduct itself and to achieve the goal of quality cost effectively. Change or innovation can only arise within the existing frameworks or at best with their blessing since the politicians will very seldom act without the buttress of acceptance from the professionals. And so with guaranteed funding and an invitation to set their own mutually agreed definitions of quality, we get what we have.

This analysis has been abundantly apparent for more than twenty years in Britain, during a period when so much of the politically controlled pattern of our society was changed, including health care, that its resilience is truly remarkable. Dare one hope that there is a chink in the Armada's armour however? Will the Internet's open skies approach to knowledge sharing and debate and the access to qualifications around the globe act at last to restructure the way society provides this great service? It was certainly the case that the establishment of The Open University in 1967 transformed the opportunities available to millions of adult students in Britain and around the world and dramatically reduced the cost. Will such widely derided yet inspired initiatives as the Western Governors' University in the USA and many of the other imaginative approaches on the Internet (such as auditing all MIT's programmes) begin to bring competitive analysis and choice of learning approaches into the debate and thereby bring the student as customer to the forefront of concern?

Graffito 82

Education.dot.com

Having raised the spectre of education on line, it seems necessarily appropriate to address its exciting and wilder side straightaway. Both the management professional and academic publishing house where I worked for 30 years and my own Business School were amongst the very first to adopt the new technologies totally.

There seem to be perhaps three helpful ways of evaluating the lessons we have learned of what it implies.

Firstly, it provides an improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness

of knowledge collation, searching and dissemination that exceeds that of the invention of the printing press in the late 15th Century. For a potential student in the Yukon or Papua New Guinea or Southern Africa, provided only that a telephone is in place, access to a library grander than any dreamt of by Ivy League professors is available instantly, and most of all it is searchable at speeds hitherto unimaginable.

Whether a student stays on a fixed campus or studies and learns at a distance this is a quantum leap; so too for Faculty members. And the knowledge we are addressing is that much more timely and if it is course structures or text materials they can be updated and immediately available in their new formatting.

Secondly, it improves the ability of any and all tutors to sustain dynamic contact with their students using Web Meeting Places and of course email routines. This again applies to students at fixed campuses and at a distance.

Thirdly it offers the opportunity to rewrite the patterns of distance education per se. Instead of a one on one learning relationship with a tutor via structured course materials the opportunity presents itself for a virtual classroom to be created and for interaction amongst students possibly destined never to meet face to face, from any or all parts of the world.

Significantly the only one of these three issues that has made much progress is the one that does not involve the Faculty members i.e. knowledge access and searching. Librarians have been welcoming of the approach if anxious about where it might lead for them professionally. It clearly offers more knowledge per dollar, and eliminates much wasted/un-used knowledge purchased in the annual rounds of subscription renewals. The librarians' welcome says much about the outward going orientation of their profession in the service of readers.

But Faculty have not responded well as a whole. The notion that students should be in any major way proactive even in continuous open access relationship with their tutors is widely seen as an intrusion. In comparison with a notice on an office door saying "Available for Consultation Monday and Thursday 3-4 pm" it is indeed a monumental threat to a way of life. In comparison with structured telephone/mail relationships in distance education it is also a major change.

One ends up wondering what precisely does absorb the life of a Faculty member if not interaction with students. The most obvious answer is administration which almost certainly includes academic meetings, plus research and writing. But what of the vacation times which at some of the older institutions fill more than a third of the year. And why is there not a greater enthusiasm for a more proactive relationship with students?

I have inevitably been led to conclude that many Faculty do not have that much of an appetite for teaching. They were not drawn to the University world with that in mind, and it is almost a chore. And that does not augur well for what is certainly in store longer term for education.dot.com.

The other side of the coin is the student's own response to the arrival of the Internet thus far. There is little evidence available to show them making a coherent use of it except as already observed for knowledge searching. At a time when the great majority have been brought up with a PC as a standard item in the home, using it for homework and all manner of games and surfing, it is still surprising that it is only occasionally used for formal education.

Even if the traditional arguments about cost and technical problems are discounted there seems to be less than 100% enthusiasm to make use of it for formalised interactive educational processes. Even the theories advanced that it enables the normally withdrawn student to participate without embarrassment in debate do not seem to stand up to careful examination.

The reality still seems to be that nothing can beat the opportunity to conduct a longitudinal debate or discussion face to face. The short term future as it seems to be emerging will be one where the use of the web merely enhances the desire to meet face to face. Only at the margins of our educational lives will the web alone be able to act as an efficient and effective way of tidying up details. Nothing that can be observed about synchronous versus asynchronous schedules seems to contradict this proposition either.

We are left therefore to ponder whether we can already discern the end outcome of the Internet, or if much much more is in store. My vote has to go for the latter. It is barely 10 years since the Internet first emerged in scientific laboratories and today it is in millions of homes and offices. As with the telephone it will soon become a truly ubiquitous way of life. Video linkages will be comprehensively added

to the current voice and word content, and much more of what a truly face to face meeting can achieve will be added virtually. But it will take time for Faculty and students to want it to be different.

All the research we have on the diffusion of innovation suggests that we are no further along the innovative road than the Early Majority. And that level of adoption is in respect of the basic functions of PCs and the Internet. There is clearly a major pause for breath as the new millennium has dawned, after the wildest investment explorations and the much publicised dot.com crashes. But there are clearly myriad ways in which the Internet will serve education on the three dimensions here described without any anxieties about financial disasters. They seem largely to have arisen from an overweened advertising push based on the assumption that if only we knew a website existed we would definitely make use of it. But the evidence shows that bricks and clicks look like the immediately effective way forward. It gives us the reassurance of the tangible with the convenience of the Internet.

Graffito 83

CyberSets and Virtual Tutors

Our early adoption in the Business School of the Internet meant that a whole new skill set had to be acquired for Faculty members. None of our Faculty differed greatly from the generality on which I have already commented. The notion of open skies access to them from students at a time when they felt barely competent themselves to use the Internet in the first place, let alone complete online marking sheets was not received with approbation. It was alright in the very early days of the zealous innovators, but once the reality dawned it became an increasing burden. Our drive to be 100% Internet based was held back by the reluctant core who continued to use pen and ink and many a doubting Thomas assured us all that the Internet was going nowhere since teaching was truly about staff/student interaction and caring.

But we quickly found that there were natural audiences for CyberSets. The first major group of managers came from Marriott International Hotels, scattered around the world. They seldom had

time or budget to meet face to face, but a judicious combination of face to face meetings followed by activities that could be shared, progressed and monitored online worked well. A set of a dozen or more Human Resource Managers worked on an advanced programme to come to terms with virtual tutoring for others in the organization, and designed developed and conducted those subsequent interventions via the Internet.

The obvious delineation had emerged for CyberSets as consisting of folk who would otherwise not be able to interact on a regular basis but who also had the opportunity to meet face to face from time to time. The ideal moments for those face to face sessions appeared to be at the start up to build effective relationships and understanding and then at critical issues moments throughout the programme. For many CyberSets they can soon discern when they will be. If a key project outline is to be thrashed through then again face to face helps. In fact the truth of the dictum Always Put the Effort in Up Front was born in on us again and again. When it was not adhered to the CyberSet model allowed a great deal of unhelpful activity or floundering to take place before the checks and balances arose.

We also began to learn how to manage online contributions in Meeting Places. An early habit of asking 'everyone' to comment seldom drew any response at all, or if it did it came from the person who always spoke first. What came to be known as 'shoulder tapping' emerged as a sound way to go. Every general message always asked one or another person to be first off the rank with a comment or response. And further, the tutors began sharing progress chasing on issues amongst the students themselves, so they participated out of loyalty one to another as well as to the programme leader.

Faculty had their worst fears left unrealised. The open skies approach did not bring a massive Agony Mail every day of the week. Quite the reverse. Faculty found that they had to play sheep dog to the flock scattered all over Cyberspace. On a bad day they would blame the students for not playing the Internet game the way the Faculty wanted it played. There were thoughts of allocating grades and marks not only to the quality of participation on the web but also to its frequency. Wisdom prevailed, and more deterministic approaches emerged that built participation into the programme designs and, for instance, elicited feedback on course materials at important stages during each course.

The CyberSet engagement I am referring to here was for programmes that potentially lasted as long as three years from start up to achievement of a Masters or Doctoral award. When combined with structured Intramurals where each CyberSet agreed its own agenda before meeting face to face an extraordinary camaraderie emerged. Students shared all manner of issues such as downsizing/redundancies as well as inspired career moves one with another and with their Faculty team. This had a very strong social bonding impact in almost every instance and encouraged the emergent belief that no matter for what reason the students came together, no matter what the overt agenda might be, they were all there for personal outcome reasons that were well worth listening to. Furthermore although the programme concerned put them through the same challenges, their disparate backgrounds inevitably meant that some found some aspects tougher than others.

There were times when we pondered confidentiality, when we thought we discerned rage, and even when we thought we were being too trivial. I recall we discussed not only what cars we drove on one occasion but on how long and even through what terrain the drive to work each day went. Everyone was online in a trice, chattering away in a manner that some of the finer intellectual points would never elicit. There was only one salutary occasion when an employer took it into his head that everything being discussed at the Meeting Places should be confidential and that all manner of competitors might look in and pick up all manner of great ideas even great secrets. Firstly he wanted the Meeting Places password protected then he wanted to assert copyright over what individual students were saying one to another. And finally copyright over the assignments they submitted. Another gave cause for some considerable amusement amongst Faculty when he sought to insist we took out Professional Liability Insurance for any daft or unsuccessful notions commended in debate. Extrapolating that to deem any mark above Pass meant we all believed the determination was good and stood behind it when implemented corporately left us all breathless. But sanity soon returned. It was widely reasserted that we were all teachers because we did not know how to do it, and that everyone out there accepted and understood that; in fact often said it right out loud and clear!

Maybe the most memorable moments of all arose at their graduation workshops, which we always hold face to face in cities around the globe by rotation. Their coming together face to face in celebratory mode as individuals who know one another so well virtually was a delight. And they revelled in sharing it with other graduands who had taken differing routes on their programmes. Their spouses and children were there too meeting names from the web they almost felt they knew. Often the children were sharing stories about helping parents come to terms with online forms, attached files into Meeting Places and more besides.

Graffito 84

Sparkling Virtual Congresses

Organisations usually have at least one major gathering each year, the equivalent of the farmers' harvest festivals. Our business school was no exception. It was the ceremonial graduation congregation which always was and still is a splendid moment for those who have finished an extended period of study, and for their proud relatives. But the celebratory mode meant it was not ideal for any required serious debate on issues that affected what was in fact a thinly and very widely spread structure. At any moment in time programmes would be in process in more than a dozen countries and over the past decade forty countries were included. And since it is the determining characteristic of the organisation that we are a network many diverse characters and local institutions were involved.

So we resolved that we should seek to have not just our own version of Harvest Festival, but also an Annual Professional Congress. It was held, like the graduation congregation, in diverse cities around the world, hosted each time by a local network partner, at the intervening six month point. That decision has taken from fifty to ninety of our global Faculty members to destinations from Surfers Paradise in Queensland to Cape Town, from Curacao in the Caribbean to England's Surrey, Sarawak's Miri, Delft, Hong Kong, Boulder Colorado, Kuala Lumpur and Crans Montana in Switzerland. Every one well worth visiting of course in its own right, but that was not the point at all. In the network the felt need was, as with the Internet

CyberSets discussed earlier, to get to know one another face to face, to see where and how it happened.

Yet participants at the Annual Professional Congresses (APCs as we call them) seemed to spend most of their time 'just' networking. Any attempt I or my administrative colleagues ever made to generate serious discussion and to meet in focused groups to kick ideas around and set up action agendas was tough going. We got there because we forced the pace, but we did not really believe we were getting the inputs we truly wanted. And we believed that getting such inputs was quite vital in a network, where partners are there by choice and there is no meaningful definition of a centre or head office.

This was until some 5 years ago, when we hit upon the notion of using the Internet to get ideas and issues flowing *before* the Congress started, to regard the Congress as already in process when we first met face to face, and to knit the two sets of activity together in a single Report and Action Lines outcome.

We quite simply took the big issues around at the time, and made them one of up to six Congress Themes. We put them on the Web two months in advance and attached a few background papers and then we invited the key protagonists (and antagonists) of the issues to kick ideas around in a Theme Chat Room. Obviously some themes fared far better than others, and some indeed never took off virtually. But by the time we were meeting face to face those who were not going to be able to come had the opportunity, as well as those who were, to make seriously considered contributions or comment.

The success of these Virtual then face to face Congresses was manna from heaven for my colleagues and I who were responsible for pan-network functions like registry, accreditations, ISO 9002 protocols, Faculty Induction and Development protocols and even for the evolution of new core systems such as online learning platforms. We were able to listen, share and legitimise what we were about as Action Lines arising from the APC. It was not a cynical exercise, but rather a eureka like discovery of how to manage our functions better within the network structure. And whilst it sounds obvious when the story is told here, it was certainly not at all obvious at the early APCs.

The earliest, face to face only APCs had been traumatic. They almost at once became whinge sessions where the so called centre and the distributed Faculty examined one another's shortcomings. We were delighted to have everyone together so we could really sort out what

needed to be done better. Our biggest error as convenors globally was to seek to get these face to face Congresses to stick to an agenda of our own making rather than remembering the eternal message that the agenda at a conference is no more than the overt excuse for being there so we can all network on our very own salient issues.

It was by letting whoever from wherever tell their story from whence they came, and their origins were as different as could be – black African townships, down town Amsterdam, Port Moresby Papua New Guinea or a South Pacific island state like Vanuatu, California, Toronto, Ethiopia, Helsinki, Sydney, Ho Chi Minh City, Kosovo, Kuching, Ipoh or Macau – that comparison gave us the greatest of insights.

The reason we were the first Business School in the world to go 100% onto Bulletin Boards in 1993 and the Internet in 1995 was because Faculty seated at an APC in Milton Keynes England simply saw it as obvious; all we had to do was do it. The reason in 1998 we resolved at Cape Town, South Africa to establish our own Corporate University in the USA with DETC accreditations from Washington rather than seeking any more frustrating traditional University alliances was because the Faculty at that APC saw it as the only next way forward to go. Both these initiatives, and there were many others, came from the floor of the APC and came with feeling and justification.

There were some tough parts to the sparkle of our Virtual Congresses. The toughest was the technology although the house rule Never Blame the Technology, Just Fix It normally kept us sane. The technology was and still is changing, even on occasions improving the functionality of what we are about even if not always. As we travelled from Mk I Bulletin Boards in 1993 to our Mk IV Learning Platform in 2000 we all had to relearn the eccentricities of the differing systems. How to attach files in Chat Rooms, How to get your name removed from a Conference listing ... that latter point giving rise to one of the more hilarious escapades at one Virtual Congress. One hapless person was on vacation for two weeks and left his email messaging service to inform anyone who mailed that that was indeed the circumstance. Little did he or we know that his last act before going on vacation would be to send the Remove message to the wrong address. An infuriating game of ping pong then began between the two computers.... but as one wag observed, it meant that that year's Virtual Congress had more messages than ever before.

But the toughest task of all was writing up the Report and Action Lines at the conclusion each year. I claim no credit there at all but there is a long-serving heroine who I would want to thank here and now who made the disciplines of virtual life her own preserve and has earned our deepest gratitude.

Graffiti 85

Where Were We in 1988?

But all this is to get way ahead of ourselves. Where were we in 1988? Certainly 35-year-old Tim Berners-Lee, the Englishman who invented the Web at work in Switzerland (and don't let any American tell you otherwise – all they did was throw their mighty \$ at it) had not yet made his ground breaking contribution. It was a year away, and would not be available on the Internet until 1991. There were no CyberSets or Virtual Congresses on our minds let alone in place. We were in fact mesmerised by an unbelievable act of educational vandalism committed in May that year in the British Parliament. On the initiative of Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet (an enterprise normally associated with quite the opposite point of view on such matters) the Education Reform Act became law and inter alia made it criminally illegal for our Business School to continue its activities from England in awarding its own degrees of membership. That was to be reserved to the cartel already alluded to as the Armada, and they were scheduled to be very protective about it all.

But of course every cloud has a silver lining if you can survive long enough to let your positive thoughts overcome sheer incredulity, anger, frustration and the rest ... And as we were already beginning to observe in Graffito 80, multi-nationalism was to provide the immediate way forward egged on eventually by the mighty powerful hypertext protocols of Tim Berners-Lee. Frankly without the insanity of 1988's criminality we could still be Little Englanders and reluctant players with the Internet.

We had to overcome the revised paradigm for British Business Schools with some alacrity, and we were able to do so very easily as it turned out. The Education Reform Act allowed non-English educational institutions that were awarding degrees of membership to

make agreements with English ones; and provided the certification given clearly indicated they were foreign it was in order to offer programmes. Our colleagues in Australasia, in Queensland, Vanuatu and New Zealand to be precise, all obliged.

Even so, Her Majesty's Government wanted to be helpful, they said. They understood that companies very much appreciated our work and would like to bring its assessments within their new, isn't it simple really, framework. We ought to talk to the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), which was very much within the cartel. "They knew quality when they saw it" we were told by way of reassurance. Sure they did. They set up Panels of existing institutions who deemed quality to be they way they did it. Managers need to know economics and statistics, and they knew how quality of management success would be determined by the number of hours they spent in class and how many marks they got in a written examination on what they decided to teach them. Far wiser than any of us, or indeed of any of the student managers.

We talked, a lot, but to no real effect. We simply got on with being multinational eventually establishing our own US based University of Action Learning a decade later in Colorado.

Talking of Australasia it was there that I wrote Graffiti 41-80. I had the good fortune to fall amongst good friends when teaching at the University of Queensland in 1980/1981. This friendship included use of a splendid Unit as they are known near Southport Yacht Club on the Gold Coast. I wrote there and our younger son did the illustrations during his year out before heading for a professional career as a geotechnical engineer, later achieved and swiftly abandoned. The older son was already at university reading economics to be followed by accountancy again swiftly abandoned ... like his brother for the lure of the Internet, for which I was not to blame. It was indeed they who switched me on, demanding that I take it seriously. So I did. The accountant joined the publishing house in Bradford and led them onto the Internet in 1994 and the geotechnical engineer, doctorate in hand, joined the Business School. Both in time followed the School's MBA with their workplace colleagues as indeed did two female members of the family.

The treacherous hypocrisy of the Thatcher Cabinet had the normal effect of uniting those who had devoted six fertile years to building the School as I had outlined at that time in *Creating Wealth Through*

Management Development. We all believed so greatly that we had in action learning a powerfully effective way of developing adult managers that we determined not to concede defeat even if we had clearly lost a major battle. We emerged more audacious often to the consternation of both the government's ministers and fellow Business School academics in the traditional sector. And best of all the corporate clients who had recognised what we were offering as a high value added approach stayed with us both in Britain and also in Asia. Our commitment to a learning approach that respected the preferred learning styles of practitioners and demonstrated that real issues in the workplace could become the curriculum on a grand scale was always going to be a winner. Provided we persisted we would surely triumph. But we did not grow in strength as a network after the 1988 debacle. We survived with dignity, serving many corporate clients and individuals, staying loyal to action learning.

So I have perforce to explain in the Graffiti that follow here how it was that we lost the thread of growth not once but twice in the next decade. Firstly we made an unfortunate alliance with a major consultancy enterprise. Second we pursued for some ten years the notion that we could best achieve our objectives in adult learning in alliance with major universities in Britain and Australia rather than by standing alone. Only in 1999 did we finally call a halt to the misconception that the prodigals could ever return whence they had come. There was no fatted calf for killing and roasting.

Colleagues arrived at a brutally simple conclusion at our Cape Town Congress. We had to be origin not pawn. We had to accept, as Reg Revans had, that only we could make it happen and that we had to build alliances of a wholly different nature, with our customers, with our students and their employers rather than on the supply side of the market.

Graffito 86

Taking A Bath whilst in Singapore

I had been working by day in Singapore, but was taking a bath when the phone rang to tell me that the major marketing agency for our Business School, Buckingham House Limited, had gone into

liquidation. It was followed shortly afterwards by its parent company, Doctus plc. That was 1991. It came as a surprising jolt to us, knocking most of the breath out of our corporate lungs. And it was a great disappointment.

In the late 1980s the Faculty members had stoutly backed IMC and had borrowed from bankers and others besides to subscribe £565 000 to fund five new Chairs and a marketing and sales campaign through Buckingham House Limited. It had gone well indeed. Sales rose and several of the new Faculty proved to be very talented indeed at that task. In making our way forward we had happened to attract as a client a rapidly growing consultancy and personnel services enterprise, listed on the UK Stock Exchange and with sales of 170 million pounds. It was known as Doctus plc and it was growing by acquisition. Its consulting arm resolved to make an offer, of twice the originally subscribed share value three years after launch, for all our equity in Buckingham House Limited in order to take our services widely across their own client list. We accepted.

To be clear, the financial collapse of Doctus plc was not occasioned by its involvement with IMC, it arose from its acquisitions approach generally. But we should have seen that the two enterprises could not fit comfortably together. As consultants they offered their clients the benefit of solid systems and authoritative reports from an external perspective. For our part we suggested that consultants were not needed; all that was required was that the managers in situ address their own critical issues via action learning.

As with all bad outcomes, the positive thinkers searched and with hindsight have now found three pieces of excellent news arising. The first was financial. Because the Partners IMC had in the Orient all paid in instalments, when Doctus collapsed they did not take their fees in advance with them. The same was not true in the UK where the exiting directors left Customs and Excise unrequited with their VAT, voluntary pension contributions adrift and Faculty unpaid. The fees from the Orient, plus the willingness of Faculty members to teach on an expenses only basis to a conclusion and the generosity of the Official Publisher saw us on an even keel within two years.

The second was behavioural. You learn who your mates are, as Australians would say. There were some sad surprises around as folk necessarily scattered for shelter, and some who sought to allocate blame rather than standing up for getting it sorted out. Hard to

know what old school tie they wear! But there was never any doubt however that we should keep the show on the road.

A new small enterprise called Team Management Research Centre/ later Internet Research & Development Centre was spun out by some six Faculty members committed to seeing matters through. Every one is still there today, and it is to them that today's IMC owes its very existence. They were welded together as they went along and today's staffs know it is pointless to try to leverage them apart. They smooth-talked the local Buckingham creditors, made the premises into a self financing Office Services facility, rescheduled every Faculty programme, kept the accreditation agencies blissfully happy, and took the Congregation off to tour the globe starting with Kuala Lumpur and Queensland rather than the UK.

The third lesson was institutional. IMC had survived not only because there were instalment Associates in the Orient but also because Doctus plc in a rare show of wisdom had required a contractual relationship with IMC as the degree awarding body. It came to be known as The Common Agreement because it determined the realities of the business and educational processes we operated. By going to arms length from Doctus plc they had performed an inestimable service. To this day that Common Agreement as amended in 1995 remains the key framework.

What it delineates is that each Associate contracts with the degree awarding institution not any of the agencies or partners who help market and sell or deliver programmes globally. Our accrediting agencies incidentally insist on this because it addresses the teach out commitment as it is known ... who promises to finish a programme if a party goes into liquidation? This in turn means that fees in the first instance are paid to the degree awarding body which only subsequently passes on an agreed portion to the agent or partner. Doctus had not been able to take that initial share with them into liquidation.

The virtual elimination of every superfluous overhead and the magnificent support of the core team in the UK meant that after two years IMC was back into business as usual but alas without any resources to drive forward and grow. That had been the great achievement of the original Buckingham House Limited investment with its five new professorships. How could that initiative be recovered?

It took us some five years to get ourselves back to a major growth cycle that matched the 1980s. And it was accomplished by the painstaking servicing of partners around the globe most especially in Hong Kong and Malaysia, and of major new protagonists for action learning in the Netherlands. By 1996 there was sufficient resource in the Global Treasury of IMC to begin those mistaken, as it subsequently transpired, discussions already mentioned with traditional universities.

Yet the Asian financial collapse was not far away at this time, and it was not too long before we were willingly repaying our debt to partners there who had helped us through our own collapse in the UK. The point was made yet again of the strength and resilience of a globally spread network which at any moment in time had good and not so good nodes. Provided the vision that united us all was well shared, and that vision itself was not potentially divisive but rather mutually supportive as action learning is, then we had a sure foundation that only required persistence to survive.

If ever there might be need for cynical proof of the managerial axiom “be nice to folk on the way up, because you will surely meet them on the way down” we have it aplenty in IMC.

Graffito 87

Going Dutch

I had worked a great many summers at Noordwijk during the 1970s teaching on the European Logistics Management Programme offered there at De Baak, and got to understand the Anglo-Dutch entente reasonably well. So it was a pleasure to hear that a wholly different group drawn from Rotterdam City Council and Phillips were launching a new Business School in Holland and were interested in talking with us.

They arrived by ferry rather than plane – the Channel Tunnel had not yet been opened – and drove to us in Buckingham via a roundabout route in Lancashire and Cheshire, where they had relatives. They had contemplated offering the Herriot Watt University taught course structure and held discussions with several British universities already. We explained the way we worked with

Partners and they immediately said Yes, let's do it. And that approach has characterised their approach to this day. Yes, let's do it in Curacao in the Caribbean; Yes let's do it in South Africa.

The Dutch have a unique place in the English tonguewe say "double Dutch" and we say "going Dutch". They are widely attributed and correctly so with responsibility for having put the Orange into Ireland when William of Orange as husband to Queen Mary became King in 1689 and the Battle of the Boyne followed with settlements in Ulster Province. They also have a reputation for wanting the last word in any discussion, and so it normally proved.

Their CEO had a background both in psychology and training as well as 1970s computers. So he readily understood the need for using the Internet but he had no messianic zeal as we did. He also worshipped at the shrine of central place theory. The Netherlands being a small country which one can drive from end to end in a day, he argued that his Business School should be located in the centre, and that led him to Kastel Heukelum. It was a fine, modest sized castle, with a moat and drawbridge, and suits of armour and the right other furnishings within. It was an absolutely inspired choice the only downside being the toilets which were limited indeed. So far as his ever growing ranks of students were concerned it was not only centrally placed, it was a great place to visit and a perfect ambience for study.

He also chose very wisely when he came to name the School. He selected Business School Nederland (BSN) – the Action Learning Business School. He had identified at once in his discussions in Buckingham that action learning was what it was – not just a great way for adult managers to learn but also a brand differentiator. When he added to that the branding that he was the Nederland's own Business School, and that students could surprisingly uniquely work in Dutch as opposed to American English, he had a winning formula.

He focused his programmes in two directions, which were all run with face to face sessions at Kastel Heukelum. The first was a broad introductory General Management Programme and from that students were invited to proceed to the IMCA MBA.

It was not long however before he became restless in at least two ways. He was a creator/innovator and wanted to do the next thing. So he looked at the Dutch speaking world at large and chose the Netherlands Antilles in the Caribbean as his next stop. With his family nearing the end of their schooling they relocated to Curacao leaving

the Dutch operation under the leadership of his colleague originally from Rotterdam City Council.

In no time at all the island of Curacao was throbbing with the music of management education and training by action learning. The General Management Programme succeeded best with hundreds from that island and nearby Aruba joining in. Yet the market was modest in size if the language remained Dutch, and increasingly his thoughts turned to Spanish markets in Venezuela and more locations to the south and the English language markets of the remainder of the Caribbean and into the USA.

The second manifestation of restlessness was the business arrangements that he had with IMC, allied with that Dutch need to have the last word. The normal percentage contribution to IMC by partners globally was yielding a rich source of funds for IMCA to develop research activities, and although all our Dutch colleagues were involved equally in the central determination of what to do, they felt they should be accorded an improved business relationship. Without rancour, what were to be known as The New Terms were agreed.

Once such a process begins it is always hard to know where it will end of course. Having learnt how to be a successful action learning Business School, why stay with IMC? The base answer always was because it has the authority to award its own degrees and its partners did not. So when the Dutch Government resolved to establish a Register of Approved Institutions that could award MBA degrees under Dutch law it was not surprising to find BSN at the head of the queue and successful. And that success led to The *Revised* New Terms, with an even better business arrangement for them.

Was there a lesson here for IMC as a commonwealth of institutions? As they became locally successful would they all leave the nest? But our Dutch colleagues said No to that. IMC was and remains a cosmopolitan network and provided it made sure that all its members could share and compare globally it would have a continuing role. It left unanswered however the question of funding the network if all the more successful institutions drove tougher and tougher bargains on their business relationships with the network at large.

Nonetheless we found the ways to work together and succeed. When the CEO moved on to South Africa in the late 1990s to leverage again on the Dutch language there, with outstanding success and large volumes of students, we could share our own earlier IMCA work

there. We also shared our global research endeavours and our Internet experiences. When the CEO resolved to become non-executive in 2001 his successor was to be an IMC MBA graduate from our CyberSet working in depth with several members of the UK Registry and Editorial team. We held our Graduation Congregations together in Amsterdam and Rotterdam and our Annual Professional Congress in Curacao and Cape Town as well. The commonwealth lived on and we all learnt a new pattern of inter-relationships.

Graffito 88

Surfers Paradise Goes Indi

The art and skill of surfing is to get on top of the wave, something I cannot claim ever to have attempted let alone achieved. Where my colleagues and I set up our Australian base however is the home to it all, Surfers Paradise. And for most of the decade concerned it has been hosting Indi racing. My other reference point for visits to Australia has always been Melbourne Cup Day, each November.

Why is it one wonders that the Australians still manage to take serious events seriously? Anzac Day for example on April 25th, starting at dawn, is a remembrance day that is universally honoured. Melbourne Cup Day is properly respected with sweepstakes everywhere. Good Friday sees everyone on holiday and with liquor unavailable. We in the UK have crassly fallen for 7 day a week shopping and every day is the commercial same.

But back to surfing. Our experiences in Australia both in academic publishing and particularly in our business school programmes have always teetered on the brink of getting on top of the wave but never made it. Australia had been the cradle of our action learning MBA in 1982 as recounted in Graffito 51, *The XXXX Run*. During the 1990s it seemed to have lost its way. It came under the spell not of CEOs and line managers but of the Human Resources Management professionals. And the competition from traditional Australian Universities was intense. Yet there were very high profile successes too with ICI, Shell, Thomas Cook and Lucent Technologies.

It began to seem as if the whole ethos of our Australian involvement was satisficing. It is of course God's own country with Mediterranean

and Florida type climatic regions, farming, vineyards, extractive industries, brilliant education, high level research sciences and manufacturing where it can make sense. Its sporting prowess capped by the acclaimed 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney is internationally renowned. Its cricket and rugby teams had a run of being almost unbeatable in the UK. Not far off across the Tasman Sea the New Zealanders were at work taking the Americas Cup away from the USA not once but twice in a row with a brutally clean sweep of all races. Even Crocodile Dundee has given most of the world a stereotypical image to conjure with.

The country still has the most difficult challenges on its hands as it moves forward in the 21st century, which is not only about the trauma of introducing GST/VAT in 2000. It is to come to terms with its presence in the Asia Pacific region, to adjust its foreign policies to the ups and downs of Indonesia's affairs such as East Timor and its aftermath, plus more than a few high jinks across the Pacific. All this is on top of its continuing need to address the issues raised by its aboriginal peoples. As if that agenda is not sufficiently large, it adds ritual abhorrence of the much ridiculed historical stance of the Colonial Cringe, feasting on debates to end the role of the British Crown in favour of a Republican model of government.

Yet as with all networks, quiescence normally precedes an eruption. From an Iranian scholar and from a Greek Australian, rather than the First Fleeters who began our activities in the mid 80s, new initiatives in Futures Forecasting and Export Education for Chinese Managers emerged at the turn of the millennium.

The Indi at Surfers Paradise has been something of a contrast. It does of course close the streets for nearly a week. The fun is great if you go with the flow. A bit noisy as one grows older, but the thrill of high speed car racing where the previous week you were watching for a speed ticket at 40 kph on the seafront is infectious. The event lasts more than a few days and brings all the razamataz you could want with it. Gala balls, drag racing, national auscars and the rest. The logistical skill with which it is all put together and the speed with which it is all taken away leave a deep impression. Events management really has come of age around the globe, something we learnt further as we became deeply involved with the Venue Management Association of Australia and its world associates on a Graduate Diploma programme we undertook.

For us personally Indi Day itself, a Sunday, has its well established routine. A decade of visitors has been required to conform. Wake early and get the chequered kit on. Fill water bottles, start walking to buy the One Day Ticket at Breaker Street, Main Beach end. Keep walking the extra 3 kilometres to the Surfers end of the track, taking the rubber stamp on the hand as we exit in time for noon lunch, preferably at George's Paragon. Great Greek mezes followed by sole on the bone and fine white wines. Feeling much the better for it, at least so far, begin the walk back. The Indi Final begins at 2 and runs for up to 3 hours. An early crash can be expected as they jostle but soon all is sorted out. Some of the laps will be under the Marshall's flag whilst an incident is tidied up here and there. A heavy shower, which we usually get amidst the glorious sun, brings debate on tyres and when and whether to change them. And then it becomes clear that two or three are going to fight it out for the final 10 laps and more barring an unforeseen incident or unscheduled pit stop.

Then as fast as it started it has finished. Exhausted and with the wine well caught up with us by now, we tread as swiftly as may be back to the unit for tea. Regardless of what the drivers take at the end there is no substitute for a cup of tea and maybe a celebratory scone and strawberry jam and cream, indeed a full Devo.

By the time the TV is on to see what we missed the discussion as to whether it has been an economic success or a trading disaster this year is already under way. Tired old faces of residents, just a few, complain that it disrupts their lives – which it surely does. Wise old faces say, if you can't beat 'em join 'em, and have a good time.

Once again Surfers Paradise has leveraged itself to world awareness on several hundred million TV screens around the world. As surfing goes it has hit the top of the wave again and stayed upright. To measure the benefit of such image projection, or to buy promotional minutes around the globe simply cannot be contemplated. But through events management at an unequalled venue it has been accomplished. The lesson here in Queensland has always been to think big and give it a go, and most Australians nationwide would claim to be cousins to Queenslanders under the skin. Not surprisingly Queensland has been the fastest growing State in the Commonwealth throughout the decade.

Iririki and The South Pacific

The Iririki is reached by outboard motor ferry that runs 24 hours each day and every day of the week. It is the ultimate hotel on the ultimate South Pacific island, set in the lagoon that cradles Port Vila, Vanuatu. Its main restaurant is named the James Michener from respect for the US serviceman who spent his War there and wrote the story that became the musical *South Pacific*. Its manager joined our first MBA programme there along with the Head of the National Planning Office and a dozen others. He came with an accommodation for tuition barter deal. The others were apparently to be sponsored by the European Union under the Lorne Agreement although the EU never paid. It was the beginning of a relationship with local ni-Vanuatu and expatriates that continues to this day.

To our very great good fortune during one of our earliest visits we met with a key leader of the country's financial and taxation services, a Wharton School MBA graduate. He immediately became the Chairman of our programmes and we established Revans University as our local institution with the consent of the then Prime Minister, Father Walter Lini. At that time the only way to gain a university degree was to relocate to Fiji with the University of the South Pacific or travel to New Zealand, Australia or beyond. Many in fact came to Britain where the Friends of Vanuatu under the leadership of our last Governor prior to independence in 1980 offered help and assistance throughout their studies. The Prime Minister was a New Zealand graduate.

Vanuatu incidentally also calls itself Paradise. It is a paradise built from cultural norms almost every visitor immediately envies. Everyone talks freely and offers help. It is not always forthcoming of course, but the offer is made and kindly meant. The ingrained charm of the culture can be readily demonstrated by events during Cyclone Sosa in April 2001.

Our first set of Bachelor graduates were due to receive their degrees. The robes had arrived from London shipped by Ede & Ravenscroft. The Tribal Chiefs' Meeting House had been reserved for the ceremony. The President and the High Commissioners were coming. Then two things, apparently unrelated, happened. The Prime Minister of the day, Barak Sope, faced a Vote of No Confidence

that the Speaker refused to put. The High Court ruled he had to table it for a vote; so he did and the Prime Minister lost office. This distracted, as might be imagined, all of the VIP Guests.

The second happening was the arrival of Cyclone Sosa on the very day of graduation. Even after navigating the fallen trees and flooding, there was no chance of using the Chief's Meeting House which stands on bare soil that had turned to ankle deep mud. Nil desperandum. The Front of House Manager at the nearby Melanesian Hotel was not only an Associate on the programme but a generous organiser too. The Outrigger Room was speedily transformed and two hours later the ceremony was going ahead. Local radio announced the new venue and advised all who could come that the event was still on. The catering was being organised by the Mothers' Union at The President's own church, so they too diverted their custom feast to the new venue as well. Nobody complained, nobody was stressed. They all just got on with doing it differently and successfully.

Cyclone Sosa came at the end of the decade I am addressing. Between our earliest adventure and Sosa was Cyclone Uma which struck as soon as we started, doing massive damage. Our first cadre of graduates went on to run the national airline and to many other significant roles in the development bank and elsewhere. Our Australian colleagues led the initiatives most lately supplemented through Next Vanuatu offering Front Line Management Initiative Programmes as precursors to the Bachelor degrees. The resourcefulness of the Next leadership has ensured that we have found a permanent way of providing action learning studies in these most favourite South Pacific islands of ours.

Some considerable way to the north west of Vanuatu lies Papua New Guinea, long cared for by the Australians and now independent. Colleagues from Brisbane went north and working with the PNG Institute of Management developed and delivered both in-company and open MBA programmes with great success until the Asian financial crisis and the country's own made funding into a major problem. Yet we persisted and by making increased use of local faculty have brought the programmes onto a viable financial basis.

It was in Port Moresby that I was honoured to meet the country's Head of State, the Governor General, just returned from meetings

with HM The Queen in London. He was himself a farmer with a deep knowledge of the challenges of management in his country and encouraged our local partners to move onwards. In Papua New Guinea as everywhere in the developing world, action learning approaches are welcomed, indeed they are widely used by most of the international aid agencies. The occasion was also memorable for another reason. That meeting was preceded by my own smoothest run ever through Customs and Immigration. From the red carpet straight to the VIP lounge, where my paperwork was accomplished in double quick time before I was whisked away in a Foreign Office car.

Kindness, simple life values, family and tribal commitment are all pervasive in the South Pacific. And I learnt so much more than I could have imagined seeing them in practice and how they evoked a caring even loving relationship in so many expatriates who worked there from time to time. Yet the greatest debt I owe the ni-Vanuatu I worked with was that they taught me patience. Some of my colleagues may well smile wryly at such a comment but Vanuatu taught me not to expect things to happen to schedule and certainly if they went awry, not to get upset or stressed by it.

I can pinpoint the moment the penny (or should I say the vatu) dropped. I was due to tutor at the Government Training Centre and arrived as scheduled at 9 am for the task. Nobody showed up, and by 10.30 I was very twitchy. The Centre's Administrator, Khami Shing, counselled me. "Nothing personal", he said. "Make your way to The Rossi (the expats' hangout on the lagoon) and have a Tusker beer, and let's leave a note on the blackboard saying: 'When you are ready let me know. I am at The Rossi'." They called about 1.15pm and we had a great week of it. Each day they let me know what time made sense to them.

This experience has since been turned into a Family Rule: Nothing is Late Unless it is At Least 4 Hours Late. The implication of that I might say is quite phenomenal. For instance a plane is very seldom late as thus defined, and to attend comfortably with the possibility of a 4 hour variance on any anticipated schedule reading matter is always to hand and, importantly, no far end consequences are set up in the first place. No appointments that cannot be accommodated by the rule are contemplated.

Graffito 90

The Great Chinese Take Away

I wrote in Graffito 64 that I wanted to be working with and in Hong Kong on the far side of its return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997 under the One Nation: Two Systems model. I am glad to say that I am, and indeed also in Macau which returned to China on the same basis in 1999.

I was in England on the day itself and, although we were treated to a magnificent rain drenched TV spectacle as HRH The Prince Charles and the last Governor Chris Patten sailed away in the HMRY Britannia, well on the way to being dubbed in our home village as the ultimate eccentric. I resolved to organise our own Flag Lowering in style with a Chinese Take Away served to all our guests.

But to digress, we had no notion at that time that the Royal Yacht would end its days as a tourist attraction in Leith, just close by my own Barony of Prestoungrange – to which I shall return later in Graffito 112.

My longstanding colleagues in Hong Kong were of course there for the raindrenching, and to see the Red Army coyly arrive to be given an immediate pay increase to be able to live in the city. They had to be there as a condition for retaining their status in the Special Administrative Region or SAR. They were seven hours ahead of GMT, so at the civilised hour of 5 pm we were able to mirror the ceremony on the front lawns at the Manor House in Milton Malsor. My wife's MGR parked on the driveway provided taped music for the occasion, and a scaffolding was erected and draped in the appropriate flags.

It was fortunate that two of our family friends had congruent credentials. One, who had accomplished the magnificent restorations at Milton Malsor and Buckingham for us, had served in Hong Kong for his National Service. He was in charge of the Flag Party. Another, my daughter in law's father, had but lately been to Buckingham Palace no less to collect his insignia as Companion of the British Empire from the same Royal Prince who was officiating in Hong Kong. To him fell the solemn role of lamentation that another spot on the atlas of the world whilst no longer British red had remained Red.

The old Colony Flag lowered for the last time was taken to be laid up at Buckingham in the Hong Kong Room, and the new Flag of the SAR was raised. And just as this was completed, the symbolic Chinese Take Away taxi arrived from downtown Northampton with a feast truly fitting for the occasion.

Intriguingly, just as we had been thinking of the SAR it had been thinking of us. The very first day of its new identity it proclaimed a pattern of Regulation of Higher Education Registration that has since been the bane of our business school life. All 'foreign' institutions wishing to continue to offer degree programmes in Hong Kong were henceforth required to register with a new Quality Assurance/Accreditation Authority, gain permission to offer programmes, paying annual fees for each course offered. So we set to work on the paperwork, and a year later gained approvals.

By this time the marketplace for senior management education in Hong Kong SAR was replete with MBAs, from local and overseas institutions. We had moved to provide one of our most successful doctoral programmes around the world there and did so with validation from Southern Cross University in Australia. Each year up to a dozen new Associates started with an exceptionally high completion rate. There are few hilarious occasions in Hong Kong, where most people we meet are busy pursuing several fulltime jobs at once, and with plans to make their fortunes. Our communications with the local University distributor who offered Southern Cross degrees in Hong Kong had been frankly poor. They misunderstood that we were offering our own awards validated by the University, whereas they were offering the University's own degrees. As our Launch Workshop really got into its stride with some 50 + attending they cried out aloud that we were not authorised. Show us your Agreement, they demanded. So we did! But as observed apart from that mishap the relationship which had just begun with Southern Cross University went on to flourish as few others had. At Lismore in New South Wales where the University has its main campus we held our Annual Professional Congress and jointly launched the *Journal of Workplace Learning*.

Our linkages for management education have wholly survived the transition to the new patterns of government in Hong Kong. And of course the Beijing authorities have meticulously honoured their undertakings on Two Systems within One Nation. The economy of

the country has weathered the Asian financial crisis of the late 20th Century with its currency holding its peg to the US dollar. Senior industrialists have wished to continue their relationship with most things British and of course western, where so much of their marketplace lies. The Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank relocated outwith the country and has made a major success of its activities in the UK by its acquisition of Midland Bank in particular.

Working together with the Asia International Open University, established under the aegis of the departing Portuguese administration in Macau, we have been able to identify and work with opportunities for action learning within the People's Republic also, delivered as appropriate in the Chinese language. The wish there for access to European and US educational qualifications is high in management because of their recognition that these two areas are well ahead in both knowledge base and more significantly practice.

The decade closed with my election as an Honorary President of the Hong Kong Quality Management Association and the launch of in-company programmes in that field at Masters level, together with our latest in-company MBA programme with an international Belgian banking group. The total marketing and delivery of our programmes is now in the hands of exceptionally able local Chinese Faculty members and the Dean of the Orient is Chinese and based in Hong Kong. Senior members of the Hong Kong Management Association advise them and students therefrom are welcomed into IMCA and University of Action Learning programmes with advanced standing credits to gain Bachelors and Masters degrees.

Graffito 91

Toronto Lives

My sister lived and worked in Toronto for much of the decade, and my niece joined her from Alberta to read medicine at University of Toronto – U of T. That meant I was able to make fairly frequent trips to see them and also to stay in touch with erstwhile colleagues at the Canadian School of Management (CSM). Its founding team had suffered the same slings and arrows of outrageous fortune as they set their path as a professional school in 1976. They had perforce settled

for Graduate and Fellowship awards as opposed to degrees after the Province of Ontario introduced legislation in 1984 to keep out the multitude of US programmes and to protect its own excellent university system.

As the wheel turns, in 2000 that same Ontario Legislature has introduced a pattern of recognition for Private Degree Awarding Institutions, and the Canadians will be amongst the first to apply during 2001/2002. May they succeed, because they have 25 years of highly worthwhile degree level professional development to their credit. Established initially to implement the findings of a Kellogg Foundation Study on Health Care Management Development in Canada, that has always been their strongest suit. But they have delivered a great deal of MBA work as well. Their pioneering recognition of experiential credits on the US pattern, and their launch of the Province's first Executive MBA have now both been long copied, and by 1996 they were in decline.

It was then that we were invited to assume the leadership of the Canadian School in the context of IMCA's global activities. We assessed its strengths as a knowledge base both in terms of programme content but also in managerial operations too. And it was in the latter field that we found the greatest scope for sustained development in that global context. And as fortune would have it my brother, a retired Corporate ScotiaBanker from Alberta, was both available as Treasurer and had access to an apartment in town we all used extensively and loved greatly.

Our first major task had to be to bring the CSM's distance education programmes onto the Internet and to update the course materials as we went. The CSM Registry was already at a Mk 1 electronic stage, which although less advanced than the global systems had a unique characteristic that would prove of great value. It was based on the delivery and payment for single courses, with Transcripts of Grades provided, and faculty retained to tutor single courses. This was in contrast to the universal IMCA model of complete programme sales e.g. MBA or DBA. The CSM model was *the* requirement for all upcoming Internet activities of IMCA globally as well as of course for its own growth and development. As such it was easy to make the investment commitment. Eventually the CSM model became adopted globally for IMCA and the CSM staffs received the contract to develop and implement it for us all.

There was a further good reason for the above pattern of investment even in a declining marketplace. It was that one of the key strategies we had always followed was to seek and gain accreditation in Washington DC for all our activities; and for Canada this was particularly powerful in attracting Associates. Without a fine WebSite and up to date courseware, accreditation from Washington would have been out of the question.

The overall growth of the Internet applications and usage in IMCA meant we looked increasingly for skills in tuition that distance educators more often possessed. Within five years the global Senior Tutor for IMCA was based at CSM and the global initiatives for Faculty development were being driven on the web from Toronto.

So the Canadian School of Management in Toronto still lives as a great institution, located in the heart of downtown on Bay Street. But it also used up most of its nine Lives. No matter how hard the team tried the former level of enrolments eluded them, and costs of operations as well as the high level of investment rose above \$Cdn 1 million. There was no obvious way forward by internal organic growth at CSM, so it took a leaf or two from the global IMCA Conspectus. It determined to offer corporate programs and to appoint Affiliated Colleges where they were offering sub-degree certificate and diploma programmes that could be enhanced. Alliances were built that could earn CSM awards of Graduate and Fellow; and these awards in turn were able within the global IMCA to gain credit towards degrees from the University of Action Learning in the US.

More ambitiously it resolved to seek acquisitions or integration with other similar Schools and in doing so to raise capital to fund marketing and sales growth that could exploit the infrastructure investments made. This included the deployment of the Registry systems and coursewares and tutorial competences in support of other brands in the marketplace, including at one stage a plan to service Cambridge University's partners Cambridge OnLine Learning. Whilst this latter arrangement was clearly pawn not origin, it did have the capability to provide volume throughputs for the developed systems and thus to amortise some of that expense.

Over a period of five years myriad colleagues and Associates from IMCA visited Toronto to share both the educational competences which were unique, but also to socialise. The event that perhaps

brought these two closest together of all was again derived from the drive on to the web – the annual Intramural. The modest numbers arising as purely CyberAssociates in IMCA were very articulate of their need to meet together face to face, f2f as we called it. The Canadians long distance education tradition of Intramurals once a year in Toronto for their students from all around the world, with credit courses on offer thereat, provided the ideal synergetic platform. Without frustrating the goals of CSM at its Intramural, CyberAssociates from the rest of the world tagged along, holding their own f2f sessions as they wished – yet one more vindication of CSM membership in the global structures.

We also convened the global Annual Professional Congress in Toronto the year after it joined in formally with IMCA. And in 2001 the Annual Global Graduation Congregation went to Toronto as well. Overtly in 2001 we were all celebrating together for CSM's 25th Anniversary. But the covert agenda was as always to make every limb and arm of the Association feel it belongs and have the opportunity to show all the rest what it can do. It also saw the celebration of CSM's role as the drivers of the new Mk IV Global Registry and their new role as System Operators for all IMCA global CyberSets. And as the CSM's application for its own degree awarding rights is being tabled and debated in Ontario under the new laws just arrived, we must wonder what if? Could be that where the Dutch went, the Canadians will follow. The Bay Street era is surely drawing to a close with new agendas arising that will carry CSM on for at least another 25 years and we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we helped at a critical moment in its life.

Graffito 92

Beaumont Street, Oxford

Our arrival in Oxford was for the right reasons which very soon went awry. But the best was yet to come. Only the bay trees on the balcony let us down but TLC restored even them.

Beaumont Street is famed for the Randolph Hotel so frequently pictured in *Morse* tales, and houses not only our own range of activities but also the theatre, many fine dental surgeons and The

Ashmolean Museum. The railway station is 500 yards away and the bus terminal is just a parallel street away. Its attraction for us was as our prestigious pied a terre in Oxford when IMC went into its short lived relationship with Oxford Brookes University. But it is a fiendishly expensive spot to have accommodations – its cheaper in London's West End.

However we were determined to do it right and took a 13 year lease on No 21 from St John's College. Then we set about bringing it up to date from its horrendous, ex solicitors' 1960s décor. It needed just about everything from replastering, central heating and rewiring to toilets and kitchenettes plus a good dash of imagination to make the grand rooms, the basement and the garret look fine again. But £150 000 later we had achieved it and the launch event, our first Graduation Congregation at Oxford University's Examination Halls in September 1999, christened the premises with great style. Colleagues and friends from around the world packed the premises from floor to ceiling. We even had a piper in to precede the haggis and replenish the Glenkinchie. The grandest room of all had been set aside as a Boardroom and decorated in the style and with the memorabilia of my lately acquired Prestoungrange barony in Scotland. Three, then and now still, controversial paintings had been commissioned from Janice McNab of Glasgow College of Art to capture what she saw of the baronial inheritance and these now grace the walls, officially unveiled on the day. They depict the Foreshore on the Firth of Forth, a 16th Century ceiling from Prestoungrange House and the Miners' Showers at the Prestongrange Colliery. (More about this divertimento in Graffito 114).

Our Oxford office decision was an exemplar of the strategy which we had evolved towards staffing in our own Internet world of work. Stated simply, there is no need for staff to relocate when you appoint them. If they are happy where they are, with spouses in the workforce and children in school, in-laws close or far from hand as desired ... then all that was needed was a convenient local pied a terre for them, plus a single rotating host location for the annual Think Tank and the Christmas Party. All other orders of business could be conducted electronically or with ad hoc face to face meetings as required.

But Oxford was more than just an exemplar of localised convenience factors, it also exemplified the style within which we like to operate.

As is so often remarked, we spend so much of our waking life at work lets make it a great place to be and enjoy. Specifically this has meant we often end up taking command of a location that is bigger than we require in order to stamp our identity on it, having the naming rights too. There is in fact only one considered exception to this which is a spacious room in Saltaire above the KFC shop, for the very good reason of synergy with the services backup that was already available there.

There was a further downside to Oxford as well as its astronomical rental/leasehold prices. It is a city hoping to ban the car for ever from its streets, presumably so that students can ride bicycles unimpeded and everyone can hear themselves think in the groves of academe. Furthermore they have already succeeded well by making parking for the day a major investment. To purchase an annual parking spot weighs in at more than 2000 pounds as well as showing up as a benefit in kind on tax returns. To assist the impecunious there are Park and Ride facilities on the edges of the city, with a regular bus service to the centre close by Beaumont Street; but this still did not augur too well for the sub-letting of the accommodation which we did not require.

However, colleagues used to sub-letting in Buckingham soon took to heart the need to sub-let at 2.5 times that price and parking lots at the going rate. At those prices tenants tended to be exotic – Formula 1 PR companies, online specialist bookshops and the like. If only our lawyer had not had a nervous breakdown and retired from the profession, and if only British Telecom had sold an intelligent office system with Internet connectivities that they knew how to make work then all could have gone quite smoothly. It took a very great deal of our best managerial talent a very considerable period of time to get the Oxford office on path for its breakeven in year 8 and a respectable ROI before the lease fell in after 13 years.

Our undoubting belief in the power of learning curves has since carried us to many more bizarre situations. We now also manage more than ample space in an old Board School in Scotland, an early 20th Century pub en route to a bistro still in Scotland, and a new office building in North Yorkshire. For a decade or more we did the same in Toowong, Queensland, Australia as well. Each is there for our own dedicated purposes but offers the balance of the space to others in a top end of the market posture. Such initiatives have

not surprisingly led to the emergence of a dedicated team of what are perhaps best described as Professional Office Services Providers.

In Toronto and Boulder Colorado, where other teams have been at work, we took what all the laws of the Medes and Persians would indicate as the intelligent course of action. We simply rent space as we need it from others who specialise in the activity. So how come we did the wrong thing, and ended up with a team that enjoyed its work and gave a first class performance doing it? It really arose from the egotistical belief/wish that it mattered and greatly helped our activities to have what might be termed cultural determination in our workplaces and naming rights over the doors. And more than that, if we could own either a lengthy lease or a property per se, then capital appreciation was also very much an added benefit.

Back in Oxford there is now a 10 year horizon still to reach on the lease from the College, a Mediterranean style small back yard to enjoy, a pattern of tenancies that is settling down after all the normal early-bird turbulence. It is a magnificent city, a magnificent place to browse the bookshops, even to be a tourist. We easily attracted our own US Accreditation Agency from Washington over for a Euro-Conference to the city and Colin Dexter obliged with a book signing and masterly after dinner speech at the Randolph that greatly impressed. We regularly indulge ourselves with breakfast meetings at the Randolph and then there's Gino's fine Italian across our expensive car parking space ... and Brown's as well just a walk away. Our ever challenging UK doctoral program always holds its meetings there. It was a wise decision that financial computation could readily demonstrate as ill advised if we gave it a chance.

Graffito 93

Frenchies and our ISO 9002 saga

Frenchies is an institution, and with it like all good institutions there is much ritual. It is an Australian fish restaurant that has been on the Southport Spit on the Gold Coast for almost 20 years. Currently owned by Sharon from a management buy out some 8 years ago it still stands next door to the Broadwater's fishing boats and serves only their fresh catches.

It was of course an institution long before it took on its place in our own folklore. It is an unpretentious, relatively inexpensive restaurant patronised by the Gold Coast locals and visitors alike. Its BYO (bring your own and we'll lease you the glasses) and it offers take out fish and chips or sit down and eat in comfort and with beautiful surroundings. Yachts, boutiques galore, a British pub, the Sheraton Mirage with a Sunday brunch to kill for ... and Versace's first ***** hotel anywhere in the world.

There's a Frenchie's angle to that Versace Hotel too. The Fisherman's Wharf that formerly stood where Versace stands today was first home to Frenchie's. In 1998 it necessarily moved 75 yards south to Mariners' Cove to continue trading.

Twice every year on arrival and twice every year on departure since 1988, and every time a visiting party is in town for APC or Congregation or just a modest Workshop or social gathering, it's a walk down the Spit and the same menu board that has been in use for ever. The same menu too with perhaps a touch of Thai to it nowadays. For me its always been herb bread, Moreton Bay bugs with chilli plum sauce for what Australians call 'Entrée' but the rest of the world calls Starters followed as 'Main' by either Barramundi or Red Emperor or Snapper *and* chips. White Australian wine completes the evening but no coffee not even flat white is taken. Nothing changes. Sharon seems never to age ...

It is also a great venue for the all Australian celebration, the Melbourne Cup. The first Tuesday in November is the day and it does for Australia what the Derby used to do for England when I was a youngster. It stops everyone in their tracks for a sweepstake that has nothing to do with gambling but a lot to do with a day out.

It was to Frenchie's that we took one of our at once most widely feared and admired colleagues for a very special occasion. She was in Australia introducing what was then our latest Mk III Registry and online courseware systems to many a doubting Thomas. That was the big agenda item. But we had all seen that such systems too readily lacked sufficient discipline and it was our determination to see what we could do to bring it somewhat nearer to rights. We had it in mind that the global standard of ISO 9002 might be just what we needed. We had not got much understanding of what it truly implied, but it sounded right. And colleagues who were teaching Quality

Management on our IMC programmes ardently advocated it as a very fine process.

The challenge at Frenchie's was to get the colleague concerned to agree it was for us, and more than that to lead the whole process of seeking ISO Accreditation and Registration back in the UK. Either the fish and the white wine proved her downfall or she was playing hard to get and was already committed anyway. But by the 3.30 in the afternoon a volunteer had been signed up, and the rest is history. Yet it was not any obvious history that came to pass.

Just as we got started the whole affair of Quality Management was going out of fashion in management-speak. The entire movement was grinding itself down in too many organizations with bureaucratic procedures and mountainous paperwork. Government agencies were frequently making it a sine qua non for inclusion on tender lists so it was being done for that cosmetic reason rather than for any deeply felt need. All too many managers regarded it as one more fad and were asking what the next one was to be.

To this day what is a relatively small administrative operation in IMC's registry area still holds its monthly ISO 9002 review meetings and looks carefully and warily towards its next Accreditation Audit Visit. (They are indeed just completing this accreditation for a new improved version). The variances arising each month against the debated and adopted protocols for a 'good' registry service are used routinely as the fillip for double as well as single loop learning experiences. Each month as variances arise the very existence of the protocol is open to challenge equally with the determination of the cause of the variance at issue. ISO protocols legitimise self criticism of performances in a manner that because they are externally derived offends none of us directly. It is of course an illusion but it works well and all hints or suggestions to discontinue are resisted from the maquis. The very subtlety of the ISO 9002 is that it invites the enterprise itself to identify its very own dimensions of quality and to manage those with integrity.

ISO 9002 is a process that sits comfortably with us as enterprises well conditioned by dead hands of accrediting agencies and their associated 'know it better than you do' validating and inspecting panels and Progress Report aficionados. The ISO 9002 approach and our acceptance of it is well compared with Frenchie's where our policy agreement to go ahead was formalised. It is deliberately self confident

and respectful of others wishes and workplace and life goals. In this respect it is truly of the 21st century, where the great majority of people in the workplace are well educated and thoughtful wholly in their own right. It is unwise and inappropriate to think for them, and wholly appropriate to help them to know that they are wanted at work as thinking responsible players, not to jump through hoops set up by mean-gooders who all too often do too little good at all.

Frenchie's has been and hopefully will long remain a constant benchmark in a changing world. It is neither high fashion nor low fashion. Upwards of fifty fashion restaurants have come and gone on the Spit in the two decades and more of Frenchies. Fitters have delighted in the profits to be made from one refurbishment after another. The only thing Frenchies has changed, and I regret it, is the Tony Bennett background musak.

Graffito 94

Nailing the Jelly in a Thoughtful Culture

As a Business School teacher in Britain since its universities took a determined interest in the subject in the mid 1960s, I have worked and delivered my services on each of the three major educational paradigms offered to students. At Bradford and on many an international visiting post I was called upon to lecture for perhaps 10 years. At Queensland University that meant up to 400 students in a single theatre taking notes as I talked my way through 20 or more one hour lectures.

At Cranfield we were, still are, a case teaching institution in the Harvard tradition. The School had been founded by one of the great Harvard exponents Bob Boland, and the three senior professors when I joined were Harvard graduates. There I worked for another 10 years with three 50/60 student classes end on with one another, handling the same case study and wondering after the second what exactly we had been saying to whom.

Finally with International Management Centres and the University of Action Learning for 18 years, it has been open house for the students to advise the Faculty what the curriculum ought to be in the light of *their* issues in *their* workplaces. And woe betide the Faculty member who pines to give a lecture or teach a dead case study from an

enterprise so far removed from the student's realities as to be laughable. My favourite dead case for students in the South Pacific has always been the well documented challenge in Cincinnati to decide which colour if any stripes should go into toothpaste to maximise profits.

By the successful mastery of these three paradigms I did however pass unscathed a threshold challenge put to me by Dr Edwards of Bradford University when I first gained my Chair there in 1968. He said: "Well done young man (I was 30 years old). Now tell me this... How do you think it will be teaching the same subject for the next 30 or so years of your life until retirement?" For once, as they say, I was speechless, never having even contemplated the fact that it might come to that. But I did tutor for that long, 35 years in fact, and I happily survived the experience. That survival I entirely put down to the arrival in my consciousness of the action learning approach to being an educator.

Actors who have performed the same role in the same play for more than a few weeks usually tell us that they sustain their freshness and commitment by living off their audience. That is what keeps them alive. It's the same in the education business with adults so far as I can see. If I had spent all those years lecturing, or debating dead case studies, I do not think I could have made it. I was literally saved by action learning. It afforded me a paradigm where as an educator I could listen in on the realities of the student's workplace, never two the same, and share with them the issues and facilitate their thinking through of how they and the team within which they worked and played could address them. Almost every day brought fresh issues and of course fresh faces. It is an element of the educational process that is seldom addressed – how to keep the Faculty motivated and young at heart. I count myself extremely fortunate.

What action learning approaches did, and always will, is to wrong foot the majority of subject matter experts. Their expertise still has immense value but it must be so very carefully merchandised, marketed and sold in a sophisticated rather than a brutal manner. Nowhere is this more the case than when we are working in areas where there is no clearly attributable received body of knowledge anyway.

Perhaps I should not have been surprised but this was strongly borne in on me in the extended work colleagues and I undertook in the late 1990s on the creation and development of the earliest online subject

specialist forums created at MCB University Press and in the Business School world.

The Forums were ordained to be created in each of seven major areas of management knowledge – Strategy, Information/Knowledge Management, Finance, Marketing, Operations, Human Resource Management and International Business. Ordained is used to describe their appearance because it simply seemed to be appropriate. The content of these forums was the truly massive database of articles written for and published by MCB University Press since 1964. They were key word, author, date, journal and article style searchable in a very imaginative and way ahead-of-its-time service known as ANBAR/EMERALD.

The question we had to ask ourselves was how to maximise access to the database and, when the users arrived, how could we best address their needs? Technologically all manner of services were possible but would anyone want and, even more seriously, would anyone pay to use them?

We knew how librarians *had* institutionally done their pre Internet version of the task for the 400 years since the invention of the printing presses and the arrival of journals. Subjects had Library of Congress and/or Dewey classification codes. Journals were stacked, nicely bound, on shelves often in a place called Stack, arranged by year with hopefully an annual index bound in at the back of each. But how were we to do it?

Frankly none of us knew. It was virgin territory. We soon contracted the well know intellectual malaise of analysis paralysis normally most closely associated with the dead case method. Accepting that we did not know, we had brainstorm after brainstorm, ideas mostly not inexpensive, bug ridden technologically in due course and often unsustainable, emerged. We asked potential customers who said they had no idea how they might in future behave in such an un-envisaged situation! What was needed was less talk and more decisiveness. What was needed as the slogan became was “to nail the jelly”. We had to settle for some format or other, knowing that we did not know whether it was right or wrong, a near miss or a mile off. Then we had to stick with it long enough and do it well enough to see if it could be a right or almost right way to proceed.

We concluded, inter alia, that despite the fact that for four centuries the prestige of the journal in which an article appeared was of great

significance, the new paradigm would displace journal derived credibility and stature. The article itself would become the first point of call for a potential user. As such, the Forums were designed to exemplify that proposition, and an Express Service notifying any who cared to leave their learning profile with us when a new article appeared was introduced. What could be finer? Whenever a new piece of knowledge emerged the reader would be automatically advised and invited by direct url to access and indeed after browsing an abstract purchase it if he wished.

We concluded a great deal more too and built systems around our unproven conclusions. Again and again. And I report this here not to highlight any crass stupidity on our part but rather to highlight how incredibly risky business life becomes when a comprehensive revolution like the arrival of the Internet reaches us. Perforce someone somewhere has to nail down the jelly, take the responsibility, get the brickbats. Wisdom was never to believe we had it right.

Graffito 95

Issues not Plans

Much of my life as a marketer has been lived in the penumbra of a famous colleague, who wrote what for many a year has been the definitive book on marketing planning. He truly went to town building from his own doctoral research and considerable practical experience as marketing director in two major beverage companies. He produced a very detailed guide to how to write them.

Plan writing is so logical, so reasonable, so absolutely likely to enable one's superiors to have a clear picture of what is hoped for, that they were bound to be popular in any large organization. And of course to position what was planned, a detailed collation of a great deal of historical information was necessary to extrapolate from.

But as has been earlier discussed with ISO 9002 and quality management protocols, it did not take too long for the whole thing to get completely out of perspective. The planning cycles of several organisations I knew well preoccupied them for as much as three months each year. And the challenge was to make the plans a perfect exposition rather than a requisite treatment.

It was with some considerable satisfaction then that my colleagues in Sydney ventured one fine day to suggest that even though the received wisdom, even the espoused theory, was for planning to be executed with the greatest commitment, in practice almost all senior managers were busy managing issues not implementing plans. As an action learner it naturally had face validity for me, but as an academic I knew I would need some convincing.

Until that time I had rested my critique of planning on the need for it to be cost/effective rather than normative and for its detailing to be requisite for those involved. If for instance one was creating a marketing plan to convince a banker to advance some depositors hard won funds on a high risk scheme then certain characteristics were required. To convince a venture capitalist an even more bizarre pattern of forecasts was frequently called for. But more modestly, to assist one's suppliers or one's own production department, some hard nosed, real time updates were necessary all the way, not just a 12 month sales projection divided by 12.

But issues not plans meant much more than that. It meant that grand plans of every variety were out. Visions yes; dreams even. But always grounded back in the reality of What Exactly Happens Next. Plans were dethroned managerially and replaced by a sense of purpose and a short term view of doing well. And the justification was that that was how managers really did behave and they did so because that was the sensible way to go. They did not have the time to do the rest of the normative idea, and if they took the step of delegating it to individuals not involved on the field of play the answer was a lemon anyway.

But issues of course have an Achilles heel. They can be enormously absorbing, excluding almost the ability to think outside the given issue. The perspective, the proper understanding of the issue, can easily be mislaid. I am not talking of people here, by the way, who cannot see the wood for the trees. I am talking of people who are very well capable of so doing but either forget in the excitement, or are too exhausted to get around to it.

Just recently I worked with an associate who was studying with us in his workplace in offshore banking. Amongst all of his clients he thought he detected one who was clearly receiving large funds from directions which could have suggested involvement in drugs or mafia activities. In accordance with protocols in his jurisdiction he reported the matter which involved some \$US 5 million. He expected a pat on

the back perhaps. Not likely. The next thing he knew a claim over \$US 5 million of his trustee assets had been taken out by the government concerned. And this was speedily followed by the unilateral termination of all his arrangements with the bankers that had been involved in the remittances. Both the government and the bankers were managing the issue as it impinged on them but quite clearly their behaviours bore no relationship to the substantive vision which underlay it all.

In another example from Asia a Group CEO in the banking sector wanted to build sales in a wide range of products and services offered. He thought the best way to move ahead was to employ two or three smart young planners with MBAs to create plans which could then be driven through a 360+ branch network. That I agreed was one way to go, but an interesting alternative might be to go the front line in the branches themselves and ask them to work out what it was that made most sense to them. Importantly, as the latter approach was implemented, the branch managers were cynical. Just one more exercise, no likelihood of it making any difference. But we convinced them to stay with it.

To everyone's amazement, except I must modestly say our own, the very act of asking and getting the branches to explore the issue in hand themselves, by the mechanism we know as the Hawthorne effect, started to move matters ahead. There was no way in which fulfilling a Head Office requirement to provide data as an input to a central planning process written by MBAs could have generated such progress. The amazement continued when the branches began to improve the quality of their local activities of their own initiative. They had seen what was erroneous in their first actions and were seeking to build on them. Now the centre had a different order of challenge which I believe is at the heart of contemporary management in a highly educated workforce. How can the centre or just any leadership role, make sense of the diversity of needs and responses emerging? How can the genuine ambiguity of it all be encompassed? How can the desire to let thinking individuals do it their way be embraced?

The answer lies in high order values and beliefs not in plans. It is the beliefs and visions that hold teams together. And of course the more battles they fight, the more adversity they overcome, the more issues they address together the more they know how to play well together.

So the superordinate purpose of leaders is to communicate and embody and enshrine the beliefs of the organization. If there is faltering or obfuscation, all will soon be lost. And very quickly lost. It is really quite a simple proposition but hard indeed to live up to.

Graffito 96

Whatever was a Learning Organisation

Peter Senge of course started it at MIT when he constructed a well thought through model of how a learning organization could be accomplished. And for the human resource managers in many an enterprise it looked like a life raft. More than enough managers with bottom line responsibilities had despaired of the succession of new ways to motivate staffs or to structure the workplace that flowed from that profession throughout the second half of the 20th century. Almost all seemed to exemplify the individual's rights at work ahead of the responsibilities to shareholders. The score cards were all too often seen as hopelessly unbalanced. It had even reached the stage where employers were being required to provide crèches free of charge for staffs. Care for elderly relatives could scarcely be far behind.

My point was, and I got into deep trouble for saying and voting so, I do not see it as an employer's responsibility to compensate employees for anything other than their services to the enterprise. And I most certainly do not see it as an employer's responsibility to cross subsidise one class of employees against another when the differential conditions arise because of free choice by the employees concerned.

I have precisely the same views about the enterprise providing facilities for staffs to educate themselves just because they so wish. My opposition is based both on the grounds of undermining personal responsibility for one's actions and the misappropriation of shareholder or other stakeholder's funds. I believe that the enterprises resources should be allocated to the mission in hand. If particular staffs are uniquely valued by the enterprise then that is quite another matter, but that the generality of staffs should enjoy unfocused perks I could not subscribe to.

Accordingly, my own interpretation of a learning organization is one in which (i) individuals indeed learn in and from the workplace and

to meet the emergent needs therein; and (ii) that the organization captures what they have learned in systems and procedures. It is this latter respect that I personally found the greatest illumination from Senge's thinking.

I had been initiated into marketing knowledge with one fascinating construct from an early scholar Wroe Alderson – that marketing was a 'sentient ecosystem'. Successful businesses were adaptive to their changing external environment and needed to be structured in such a way as to have executive action optimising that relationship. Alderson preceded the work of Galbraith on the industrial technostructure and the proposition that much of the environment we encounter was of our own making. But the construct of a sentient ecosystem has served me well throughout my career. I espoused it well before all the recent focus on change management. And it assisted me in thinking about how organisations institutionalised their learning and kept themselves continually refreshed. Here again the most straightforward construct has long been at hand in the work of Chris Argyris on single, double and triple loop learning.

Such reasoning led us to want to keep all the systems we had in place under not continuous but periodic review. It led to a relentless determination at MCB University Press to explore first database marketing and then the Internet as new ways of institutionalising learned behaviours. In the Business School arena it has taken us in a decade through four Registry systems and in six years through three global Internet platform approaches. Every time learning is captured by the organisation the variances arising give the clues for double and often triple loop learning.

In contrast to this perspective it was truly saddening to observe that all too many thought the issue in hand was to provide more courses or workplace interventions for staff members. Whilst that is certainly a means to the end of a learned and learning organization it could never be the end in itself. Still the claim can be heard from those returning to their workplace that what had been discussed and debated away from the place of immediate work was un-implementable for any of numerous reasons. Perhaps the timing was wrong or the support from colleagues and superiors was not forthcoming.

It was of course much to my delight that action learning approaches excelled in such a context. They were custom made for the learning organization as I perceived it. Managers worked in sets to achieve as

well as to speculate upon what might be achieved if only! They were expected to internalise their learning into their workplace and improve its protocols and procedures so that even if they themselves moved on, what they had learned remained for the benefit of their successors.

Nothing however seems to resolve the ultimate paradox in much of our lives, that we are afeared of what is new unless we have ourselves crafted it. Our ability to nay-say, to prevaricate and disrupt is almost superhuman. If the energy devoted to frustrate the enterprise as it seeks to adapt to changing environments were devoted to getting the adaptation effectively accomplished how much happier we all might be. My conclusion here is little more than to back the think positive campaigners in life rather than those who instinctively think negatively.

Another manifestation is the good news/bad news agendas we conjure up. I frequently begin our Faculty and Partner Workshop sessions, and corporate sessions, with a quest for these polarised listings. I have never in all my career ended up with more good news items than bad news items on the flip charts. And it is not because there is not a very great deal of good news to be heard about, its that we all take that in our stride. It is the bad news which vexes us and which we want to do something about. After all the good news should just keep rolling on.

It would be wrong to conclude however that Senge's initiative has not been a major force for good in the past decade and more. It acted as a platform for one of the most sensational periods of growth in education and learning at the workplace in western industrial societies. It gave organizations the confidence to go so far as to establish their own Corporate Universities and Business Schools. As will be discussed later we were more than delighted to resource those initiatives ourselves.

Graffito 97

Espey's dictum: Develop your Staff

James Espey passed into action learning folklore very early on in IMC's history. He, and a fellow CEO from Dupont, both led their team out onto the field and kicked the ball around themselves as well. For James it was an act of sophisticated calculation. He already held

an MBA by Harvard style case study from Cape Town University; the Dupontier was taking a complete leap of faith. I have already told the early part of both these tales in Graffito 65 (1988) so here I want just to recap and share what happened next.

James enrolled 13 and then a further 10 of his senior managers on MBAs taking the tally in his company from 2 to 25 in three years with a most impressive profit turnaround as he went. He completed his own Doctorate at the same time. Peter at Dupont enrolled an initial 11 and a subsequent 16. He took the tally of MBAs in his Division from 0 to 27 in four years with a similarly successful outcome.

It was not long before we all got to discussing how we could apply the same medicine to ourselves. As cobblers we need not leave our children worst shod. And so, with more than the occasional groan from long conditioned (I cannot begin to say long suffering) staff we embarked on a ruthless programme of staff involvement in and journeys towards action learning qualifications. At the last Congregation alone 4 gained their MSc (including my humble self), 3 their MBA, 3 their Postgraduate Diploma and 2 their Postgraduate Certificate. And amongst Faculty 4 gained doctorates and a further 3 Advanced Diplomas in Virtual Training & Development. Amongst the senior staffs virtually all managers now hold or are about to achieve their Masters and amongst active Faculty almost all hold their doctorate.

Each and every accomplishment has been through the use of action learning, from addressing the critical and significant issues in the workplace and the particular requirements of the individual concerned as their careers evolve.

Ironically, indeed amusingly, the most significant direct reaction we receive to such statistics from outwith our organizations is one of disbelief followed swiftly by a smiling suggestion that it would have been far more worthy if they had got outside the action learning frameworks of IMC globally to gain their awards. How much better it would have been if they had cross fertilised with other students or even Faculty in traditional schools.

The feedback which is most treasured however is that which is indirect, that which shows beyond much dispute that action learning really does work and that it can and does deliver powerful benefits. It is when quite unsolicited an envious senior manager from outwith our organizations passes comment of our staffs. It is not the remarks about courtesy that we count, and I am sure we all have bad days

when that is not a high performance area. No the sense of accomplishment registers when the remark is that the staff seem to understand so well what the issues are and seem to assume responsibility for the circumstances. Where do you get them from, I have been asked on occasion. We grow them, I say. And they ask how! Then we know how James and Peter felt and why they took our medicine long before we took it ourselves.

Doing action learning within any organization that believes in its potential always seems to me to depend on two fundamental questions that have to grow from the individuals involved. They have to wrestle with them whether they like it or not. Firstly, what *are* the issues to be explored? Secondly, what are the *options*? As I write this piece today I am Set Adviser to six Associates addressing these very two questions, and finding it difficult, very difficult. Yet gaining the confidence to answer them is a vital step on the road to leadership and managerial effectiveness. The wood must be seen for the trees, and we must all learn that there are many ways to accomplish any given goal and no one is likely to be right for ever even if it served well for the past.

Two of the most monumental issues that I have been concerned with over the past decade and which are of course extensively discussed in this volume of Graffiti came in again and again for scrutiny by colleagues on their MBA and associated action learning programmes. The first was the paradigm shift from paper based annual subscription publishing to online databases with bulk consortia sales. The second, closely linked, was the resuscitation of the *Burke's Landed Gentry and Burke's Peerage* brand after 30 years out of print in a web context. The first gave rise to a comprehensive book with the findings of five MBA dissertations by the senior team at MCB University Press. The second is a work-in-progress as I pen this Graffito and in a wiser-now-than-then context concerning what will and what will not be accomplished on the Web.

Both these major endeavours at the leading edge of management thinking had perforce to proceed without a body of literature to review. What we were doing was creating the literature for the future. All that was really available were press cuttings and wishful thinking by enthusiasts who could comprehend what was technologically possible but not what individual readers or authors might be willing to essay.

It is perhaps appropriate here to conclude by asking can an organization ever do too much action learning? The answer I always give is – not really. It may well be the case that the establishment of formalised programmes of action learning on an end on basis can be exhausting, but even if a breather is being taken the inherent pattern of learning will proceed. Ultimately, when an organisation has truly taken on board the approach concerned staff members immediately fall into its routines. They do so almost always at the expense of other normative approaches, which can well be characterised as a bad thing. There have to be moments in life when we can simply enjoy hearing all about something which quite unexpectedly takes on meaning for us. A serendipitous pattern of learning. Yet despite the excitement of its happening and even of our search for Shangri La without arriving there we are forced to admit it is potentially a very inefficient way to go.

The most powerful critique I hear is that it drives out skills training. The emphasis is so greatly on the need to think it out for oneself that one is ill prepared to accept that the answer is already known, as Reg Revans observes it is simply a puzzle to which the answer is known. It can be fun seeing if one can arrive at the correct answer to the puzzle, and why not, but it has no serious meaning in managerial learning.

Graffito 98

Look for Sparks then Fan to Flames

My first boss in the academic world was an economist, and could have been presumed to be a rational person for all that. My own background in marketing research and advertising was more likely to make me the one to take the behavioural approach. But it was he who guided me towards a philosophy of leadership and management that has stayed with me all the while.

As the title of this Graffito suggests, he argued against equality and in favour of rewarding those who helped themselves. Not for him the equal allocation of total resources. He allocated just as much as he felt might trigger some desirable behaviours and then watched who ran where and with what. And if a decent fire got started then he

fanned the flames, moving in as much additional resource as he could muster.

The outcome of such a resourcing strategy was inevitable. Our enterprise appeared unbalanced, even illogical at times. In today's rational auditing educational environment calls for a rebalancing could normally be expected. Yet the logic of his approach to maximise the returns to the limited assets at his disposal seemed impeccable.

The capacity and appetite for any organization to absorb very considerable quantities of resources to no worthwhile end is almost without limit. It can be mindless chatter at consultative meetings or the gathering of additional information, or taking greater care in considering whether the timing of this or that initiative might be correct now or be appropriately delayed a little longer; or even deciding upon postponement until after a reorganisation or new senior officer has been able to settle down ... Any reader here can add to that list I am sure. His approach virtually eliminated the prevaricator and the inconsequential work, and rewarded the activist.

The downside of lost opportunity can and will always be advanced, but the successes have been splendid. In his own right that boss took Bradford from relative obscurity to a significant player in the Business School world of the seventies by backing the marketing and sales competence of an ex Proctor and Gamble sales trainer in the top post of Director of Post Experience Programmes. Later again he took Henley from a siding into mainstream activities in management education and to a pre-eminent position in distance learning for managers around the world.

In my own discipleship he gave scope for the launch at Bradford and then at Cranfield of the first two major Doctoral Programmes in the UK at the end of the 1960s /early 1970s. From the first arose a book published by Gower on How to manage a Student Research Project that has been a top seller for two decades. Henley's distance education initiative gave the Financial Times books division a major inroad into course materials publishing as well.

Other outstanding successes were in the pioneering work a small team did at Cranfield to create the major centre for Logistics education and development in the mid seventies; another team took and still holds pole position in Marketing Planning protocols and latterly in intelligent systems work. A third team went global in Less

Developed Country marketing and sales planning working initially with UNCTAD/GATT from Geneva.

From 1982 in IMC this approach has come to characterise the entire system of global distribution we adopted to market and sell action learning programmes around the globe. And more than that, the pattern of programme development. Unless champions were making themselves felt either geographically, by industry or by subject there was no centrally driven imperative to devote time and energy to hypothesising. Once the champion was apparent then no amount of assistance could be too much.

But then there are champions and champions. Class 1 champions lead from the front, make it happen themselves and build around them a strong team of committed persons trusting and sharing the burdens one with another. They are almost unbeatable as any military tactician will attest. Class 2 champions are not really champions at all but put on a very good impression in the early days of being that. They have seen the game played. They believe they can emulate if only the centre does this and that for them to ease their way or tear down a few road blocks. They are in the end smoked out by keeping a tally on the number of initiatives on which they return to the centre for support. Not for them that indispensable virtue of persistence at the same task, trying it this way, trying it that way. They can be easily characterised as if at first I don't succeed then try something else. It was only an idea anyway.

The truest test of a Class 1 champion in my experience has been that they believe in their idea and what it can accomplish for others, or for their dreams of profits, more than in themselves per se. It becomes their life work. They do not posture to attract attention to themselves, they advance their idea at every turn, indeed to the point of tedium. Almost every challenge or issue they encounter can be successfully addressed by their idea. If it becomes an obsession that is clearly likely to be a disadvantage, but if just sufficient of the obsessional can be discerned they are normally ready and willing to be mentored and aided to fit what they are attempting into the broader picture.

For real success can normally only arise when the idea, when the sparks that have become flames are contextualised. It is the broader contextualisation that shows how to win wide markets for ideas. And whilst placing such Class 1 champions into context the leader has the

opportunity and indeed the responsibility to reconcile it internally within the enterprise as well as without. How can the imbalance of Class 1 champions be synthesised into a meaningful whole that in its turn actually assists and facilitates the Class 1 champions?

Certainly if all that is required is to write a brochure or an article extolling the synthesis, that can readily be spun. But that is not my point. How can it be socialised in the enterprise at large? How can Class 1 champions from quite disparate fields take an interest in one another and indeed help one another? What are the high level generalisations to be shared and mentored? How can they learn to understand their own success? I think it is most powerfully accomplished through story telling, by telling their own stories one to another. I hope so, because these 120 Graffiti of mine, and my associated title *e-Postcards from the Other Side*, analytically descriptive as they seek to be over 37 years seemingly are firmly based on that assumption.

Graffito 99

Cybernauts Gary and Hans

They did indeed come from outer space. And their claim to fame here arises because they were the first two cybernauts to find our terrestrial plot at IMC and ask to take our doctoral degree on the Internet. That was 1996/1997. There we were sitting at our PCs with our sparkling new website, hopefully. And they both logged in.

Gary comes from the USA and is an ex US Army Logistics Colonel. A colleague and I interviewed him at Palm Beach Florida where we were at a conference. He had Vietnam experience and a fistful of Masters degrees to his credit and more than anyone I can recall ever having met saw study as the way to tackle just about any challenge that confronted him. Since going into Civvy Street he had become VP Logistics for one of the world's largest medical supplies wholesalers. His ambition was to review their logistics systems to see what savings could be made. Taking doctoral studies he believed was the fastest way to see what the body of knowledge had to offer and what scientific basis could he use to make sure that as he moved forward service levels did not falter, and the cost effectiveness improved dramatically.

His attention had been attracted by much talk of JIT, just in time, inventory approaches developed especially in Japan initially for a wide range of industries. And five years later his enterprise is annually saving \$250 million. His doctoral assignments and thesis told the whole story of analysis, strategy formulation and implementation that went into that success. He fell foul of some academic assessors at one stage who felt he showed insufficient understanding of a hobbyist area they had, and indeed were uncertain whether such monumentally significant work for millions of hospitalised patients in the USA was appropriate as a field of endeavour in management studies. By now he is onto yet further studies with IMCA into virtual learning and even a second doctorate to come. As I said, he is a serial learner, the finest exemplar of life long learning I have met.

Hans does not however pale into any sort of insignificance against Gary. He is an East German émigré now happily settled in New Zealand, whose father was sometime Professor at the University in East Berlin but eventually a victim of communist cruelty for his outspoken views and sent into exile. Hans made a dramatic personal escape across the Baltic to the west and met and married a Kiwi wife in London. She like Gary is in medical services, but was known at one time as *Books* in a fine Scottish Castle where she had a shooting season catering contract. All her meals came from books propped up in the kitchen – action learning scholar surely!

He manifests all the fine Germanic virtues and so far as I can detect few if any of the Teutonic vices. He had completed his MBA and wanted to take his studies to the next level. Certainly a learner but like myself scarcely in Gary's league. We met and talked in Christchurch on the South Island, in a grocery distribution warehouse. A different colleague this time from IMC and MCB University Press who lives two months every year in Akaroa, the old 19th century whaling centre south of Christchurch. Talk turned to cool distribution and bananas. We confessed total ignorance of the former and my pleasure in consuming the latter, and unleashed an enthusiastic diatribe on both.

We were soon to learn much more. The UK we were aghast to learn in a later literature review of the banana industry structure of New Zealand consumed 27 million tons of them each year. We knew, simply knew, that had to be wrong. But of course he was right. Most of them go into food preparations.

But bananas were not the heart and soul of Hans' interest in cool distribution – cool not frozen or simply as we find it is what 'cool' means for produce in transit and storage. His interest was in the construction of cost effective facilities to accomplish the best transfer systems and to bring producers, wholesalers and retailers together in a vertically integrated framework. Easy to say as an academic but a tough matter to even contemplate in practice.

Circumstances and Hans made his action learning a roller coaster. At the initial interview he had been working for a major supermarket chain. With restructuring he moved swiftly to a role of consultant in the channel and then again into employment with a wholesaler. Then finally back to consultancy for any and all levels and a regular journalistic spot in New Zealand's popular grocery trade journal.

The new style warehousing patterns he hypothesised were indeed built and made operational. And his thesis was written from all three angles of the cool channel – top as a grower, middle as a wholesaler and bottom as a retailer.

Most lately they have both set to work as action learning educators too. Joining the Faculty almost immediately after graduation with their doctorates they are today offering Internet based and workshop supported programmes in their own enterprises and in their distribution channels on opposite sides of the world. They bear out only too well the reality that action learning really does become a way of life for those who have the instinct and the intuition to realise what a truly remarkable ROI it can afford.

Many more doctoral Associates have passed our Cyber way since Gary and Hans first signed up, but they remain first in our affections because they took us for who we hoped to be and working with them we created what by any criteria has to be an awesome achievement. They took PCs and databases and linked with one another around the world to tackle doctoral level studies and to emerge unscathed on the far side. For me personally the experience matched my very first supervision in 1967/1970 with Dr Saddik Saddik, an Egyptian who worked with me at Bradford University to study the textile industry at the height of Israeli-Egyptian conflicts. He went on to become a distinguished author and sometime Dean of the Business School in Kuwait.

And of course Gary and Hans have willingly taken responsibility for talking new registrants through their early months, sharing their

learning curves and offering the reassurance so vital for successful doctoral work. Interestingly, the Global CyberSet we offer for doctoral Associates has amongst the best completion rate of any worldwide. The Associates and faculty meet far more frequently than we ever expected, but at no time have we ever stipulated that they must. They simply want to meet and find ways of so doing at Intramurals offered by the Canadian School of Management, or by Les Roches in Switzerland or at Annual Congresses and Congregations. Or simply as they move around the globe in their work. By deliberately avoiding over-specification doctoral CyberSets have found their own *modus vivendi* and *operandi*. Together they have crafted a learning workplace it is a delight to work in as programme managers and supervisors alike will assert.

Graffito 100

Global Comparisons

I majored at Reading University tutored by Keith Sainsbury (then recently returned from Melbourne University hence the inclusion of Australia) for my Bachelor degree in Political Economy in Comparative Constitutions, specifically the USSR, the USA and Australia. And so I learnt to love comparative methodology. Then next I read Sociology under Professor Stanislav Andreski, also at Reading University, a leading exponent of comparison as a powerful source of insight – in Latin American Dictatorships and the like, I this time focused on the Causes and Social Consequences of Personal Bankruptcy.

I can never recall why I became fascinated with bankruptcy but, without ever becoming a participant observer, I was able to meet and discuss the issues with more than a few who had arrived in that not altogether horrific condition. I remember being especially amazed at the supportiveness of the 1916 Bankruptcy Act governing the resolution and rehabilitation processes of such unfortunates. The stereotype that they are all villains was not true then in the 1960s anymore than in 1916, and the laws recognised that at the expense of their creditors who were deemed able to survive. The only nastiness present was the arrogant determination of the government, the one

most able to withstand bad debts, to take its taxes and other dues as a first charge on any assets available before all others.

The most significant conclusion of comparative studies has to be that there are virtually no right answers and there are many ways of resolving the same question. It seldom seems that way in management when the heat is overpowering in the kitchen. A single point solution, an overarching right focus can seemingly make so much of the pain go away. But no. Any such approach to leadership must be seen as the synthetic solution it is really is. From this outcome however comes the significant realisation that at any moment in time we are looking at a workable, acceptable and hopefully inspirational way forward.

In Graffito 40 I wrote of my world study of crème caramel. I still follow it but with less dedication than then. If there was to be a focus that is acceptable and even inspirational today it is perhaps fish and chips around the world, which I have already touched upon in this volume in Graffito 93.

Nowadays however when asked to explain I normally talk of Chinese family structures and of South Pacific islanders approaches to care in the community. Much of what I say has been far better presented by Lee Kuan Yew, the architect and Founding Emperor of modern Singapore. He began by taking race relations by the scruff of the neck in the early days of the British inspired Federation of Malaysia. He opted the Chinese dominated state of Singapore out of the Federation with its rotating Kingship amongst the Sultans and left behind a United Malay National Organisation led by the Bumiputra in relative harmony with the Chinese and Indian communities. The racial disharmony that would have otherwise continued and did so in Indonesia with the most dire consequences for all Chinese living there was avoided.

As in Hong Kong, but with an Emperor in charge rather than a British Governor, a propertied population was created in less than half a century that is the envy of SE Asia and even of the PRC's leaders. They clearly prefer it to the pseudo-democratic gesture latterly introduced and left behind in Hong Kong by Chris Patten.

Both these Chinese exemplars were able to avoid the largely US inspired hazards of Taiwan and even of South Korea as they went. They expected Chinese family values to survive to support their children in their education and their social behaviours; and they

expected the same values to provide for unemployment and sickness amongst relatives particularly the elderly. They expected however to establish fitting and affordable living accommodation for all, and they expected the population at large to support a leadership of the best educated. Singapore is perhaps the most sustained example of Plato's Republic ever attempted. Nay-sayers and critics were politely but very firmly repressed even suppressed in order that the vision of sensible purpose could be efficiently and timeously pursued. In Singapore the Chinese were indeed fortunate to find in their Emperor one who knew how far to go, and even knew when to stand down and help his successors make the future happen.

Such comments might lead a reader here to suppose that I would have loved to live and flourish in Singapore. Not so. I far prefer Kuala Lumpur for all its indiscipline and untidiness. Despite the rhetoric of Malaysia's leaders from time to time, even their Buy British Last Campaign, my purpose here is to observe most strongly that Singapore succeeded. It surprised the world; and so did Hong Kong. So too but differently did Taiwan and South Korea. Each and every one was taking a different path forward.

When this conviction that every problem has myriad answers moves to my own life's work of curriculum design and learning processes it will readily be clear why action learning approaches had to be the most important of realisations for me as a teacher. The only obstacle to letting learning designs rip was our own and the learners preconceptions of the one right way to do it. And how hard, how very hard it has always been to break through.

I can and should perhaps continue with examples. From Finland, from the Netherlands, from Ireland south of the contested border, from South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana, from Indonesia, from Australia, Papua New Guinea and Canada, from the USA and even more. But perhaps I can conclude with Canada in the shadow of the US and Australia fighting to throw off its own shadow, both tilting at windmills in their minds. In Canada one finds no private medical provision at all as an article of faith, but a nation riven by Anglo-French rivalry as bizarre as Ireland North and South. In Australia we find a nation with industrial relations and protectionist chauvinism that would put even a Frenchman in the shade. Australians have to win and want to be liked. They still cannot see that you cannot always win if you want to be liked, and even those who can see stand little chance of doing

anything about it. They find it impossible to believe that New Zealand can win the Americas Cup twice and Australia only once. As the Kiwis say on their T shirts – “I support two teams New Zealand and any side playing Australia!”

Graffito 101

Our Mile High University

Our Cape Town Annual Congress had resolved that to carry our action learning work forward on the popular wave that was rising in the USA required us to be bedded in over there in a way we had never contemplated before. It also seemed an increasingly appropriate way to free ourselves from the bondage of the traditional educational cartels in most of the countries where we operated. We had welcomed and benefited greatly from our DETC Washington accreditation since the mid 1980s, as American participation in the global education export market had grown apace. But we had not contemplated the Americanisation of Emily or anything remotely similar. Rather the reverse – we encouraged our US accreditors to view us as interestingly quaint, interestingly British perhaps, and even at a stretch European.

We took the crucial step immediately after Cape Town and incorporated the University of Action Learning Inc. in Delaware close by where our new US Dean worked and had been educated. It was sponsored by all IMCA’s fourteen Constituent Institutions around the globe, as a not for profit enterprise. Then my colleagues set to work to find which state including Delaware might be the most appropriate home for the University’s home office. We had no need of anything pretentious or extensive simply because the programmes would all be conducted on the Internet anyway, and only a small core office team was needed. The DETC’s Executive Director, glad to see us following in the footsteps of the Pilgrim Fathers, was invited to identify the ideal location for our specification. It was the DETC’s accreditation we were of course about to seek in any event.

We were provided with a shortlist of 6 States which certainly respected DETC accreditations and a programme of visits commenced.

It was arduous and I was spared most of it, but it eventually settled on Colorado. That State was and still is buzzing with growth and development, and is taking at Denver a great deal of overspill from California's Silicon Valley. It clearly had its mind on e-growth industries and had already become the home of the British Open University's initiatives, alas to flounder three years later, as The US Open University.

Most of the State is on a plateau at least one mile above sea level, and the town of Boulder where we eventually set up camp lies at the foot of the Rockies highest ridges. It is of course the home of the University of Colorado per se, of the Celestial Tea Company founded by 60s and 70s flower people and now a global brand, and close by great skiing slopes. Boulder had its origins over a century ago as a gold and silver rush township, but today the University's influence on the town is profound in every way. In that respect it was wholly analogous with the environments we already knew in Buckingham and in Oxford.

With the inspired help of North American colleagues and advice from the DETC's Officers, we quickly found accommodations and with the aid of Cybernaut Gary from Graffito 99 prepared ourselves for the accreditation visit. Nobody was offering any especial favours to our new University, but because the programmes we were planning to offer were already accredited both in the UK and Canada at other IMC institutions the major challenge was to ensure our institution was Internet worthy. Or so we naively thought!

We often hear the phrase 'divided by a common language' about the British and American ways of life, and it proved to be more than the case in the arena of education. There were three critical tests set for us, and until we passed the DETC's Accreditation was granted subject to Progress Reports. The first was straightforward and required that we americanise all the course materials and programme structures to US norms. Fortunately the Canadian School of Management had already taught us this point some 3 years previously, but the americanisation of spellings and texts took a little longer. (It still gives me trouble here in writing this book.)

The second was the marking schemes used in the US which we were reliably informed meant that all students wanted an A grade and a mark of at least 70 so our typical British marking scale of 35%/80% was not going to be appropriate. After long and at times heated

debate we agreed to allow two marking schemes to be used, the American and the International and each student's record would show both using a score standardisation procedure. The explanation of this bizarre conclusion was that it was thought infinitely more likely to succeed than attempting to teach Faculty to mark to a wholly alien scale. (I had my own troubled memories of the challenge when I had been teaching at the University of Tulsa in 1976 when the first of these three volumes was penned.)

The third and most obvious and relevant challenge was to convince American in career managers that what IMCA globally offered, as now enshrined in the University of Action Learning in Boulder, was what they needed and wanted. Not only were we new, but we were not invented in the USA. But here fate dealt us a kindly hand. Just a few years earlier the US decided that it has 'invented' action learning with the likes of Jack Walsh's initiatives at GE so we were in tune with the waves; even better, the leading US author on the subject, Dr Michael Marquardt of George Washington University, knew that it had already been invented in Europe long since and that IMCA was the world's leading institutional exponent of it. He gladly identified with us and put out many a good word. And Cybernaut Gary, who had already played such a leading role in the americansiation of the coursewares now also pulled his own workplace colleagues into action learning studies as well. And over on the east coast our Dean of the US, a distinguished educationist and formidable action learning tutor, who had first met us as a Marriott International Associate in Europe and stayed with us out of belief was also active. Together they helped the first more than a hundred US citizens aboard our Mile High University within the first twenty four months to join with those whom IMCA was also bringing to the University from around the globe, via the Internet.

If what had been achieved sounds easy as written here, that is a travesty of the truth. It was extremely hard and very tough both on IMCA colleagues globally attending to the important subtleties of accreditation and the marketplace requirement to gain US students on programmes. It was also tough on the Student Support Officers based in Boulder who found themselves working with both their US colleagues and a global network almost beyond comprehension. They hosted the next Annual Congress and they are scheduled to host the global Congregation in 2004, and they have purposefully attended all

the global events in Edinburgh, Toronto, Crans Montana Switzerland and Sarawak – soaking it up and getting to understand what IMCA’s global network really is. We all struggled together to understand the different legal and accounting systems in the US as well as the marking and spelling issues already identified. But it has most certainly been worthwhile. The welcome from Colorado educators and the DETC was powerfully refreshing and the name we had chosen, despite odd murmurs, has proved to be a deliberate even audacious statement of our distinctive competence.

Graffito 102

Shower of Fish @ Great Yarmouth

Great Yarmouth is on Britain’s east coast on the Norfolk/Suffolk border. For reasons that we can no longer recall, my wife and I decided early on in the decade to make it our annual seaside outing from Northamptonshire, a show on the pier saved from its otherwise inevitable fate by the brute determination of acclaimed British comedian Jim Davidson, B&B locally, paddling and all that British style, trousers turned up. (The one sophistication allowed is the backstreet Greek restaurant.) I was brought up on the south coast of England by my Scottish mother and can handle beach life in a gale walking on pebbles with the strongest imaginable smell of seaweed and no fish worth catching at all. And my wife was a veteran of Weston-super-Mare and the south west Devonshire coast. So Great Yarmouth is easy.

I cannot say that we are typical holiday makers at Great Yarmouth or that our patronage over a couple of days each year brings any benefit whatever to the town. But we enjoy it every year riotously. My wife gets her MG R out of the garage and ceremonially recharges the battery as an harbinger of what lies in store for ourselves. It may be hard to believe but the sun always shines so the roof is down and we eschew the spanking new A14/A45 four lane west-east cross-country extravaganza and find the old country roads. Lunch at a pub is simple to arrange as we are spoilt for choice, with its Greene King ales from Bury St Edmunds to boot. Then a bracing walk on the promenade.

What a contrast in every conceivable way to the Surfers Paradise way of beach walking. Or Vanuatu. And that is the delight of it all. Back to basics holiday making 19th/20th century style. Back to holidays the way they were when they were first introduced as a socially desirable notion some 100 + years ago. It is all about fresh air and a different environment; it proves beyond any shadow of doubt that a change is as good as a rest. No pretensions, not even in the Greek restaurant. If you want a pizza there you can have it so it seems ... something incidentally we also found just this year in Moose Jaw Saskatchewan on a Conference. This time at the at The Mad Greek restaurant on Main Street! The Greeks seem willing to please and prosper whilst maintaining their true identity and omnipresent feta cheese. No complexes, after all they did prototype democracy for a considerable while before, whilst wholly realising its defects, they nonetheless passed it on to the rest of us.

The journey back home nowadays has an added frisson as we deliberately visit two or three of Suffolk's new vineyards and tempt ourselves to buy some of the expensive, improving but not yet too greatly improved, wines they produce. Here any contrast with Australian whites or even the new Canadian whites from Ontario in the Niagara region, is frankly not possible. But in the spirit of the holiday mood we always succumb and share generously with friends and foes alike when we get home. Nothing will ever get better unless global warming proceeds apace and the pioneer growers survive to improve and improve I suspect.

All of which is really a preamble that sets the scene for the astonishing news item that was reported to me one day seated at home in Northamptonshire. There had been a shower of fish reported in the back gardens of a number of local inhabitants of Great Yarmouth. It scarcely needed a meteorologist with a Ph D to explain to us all, although we were treated to one, that what had unfortunately happened to the fish was that a phenomenon akin to a tornado or twister had picked up a very handsome quantity of sea water and all that was therein, made its way ashore and blown itself out over the said gardens. A heavy squall with upwards then downwards tendencies. And is that not just like so much in our lives?

Harold Macmillan, the last great patrician British Prime Minister of the 20th century, who had been in politics since his early twenties, served with Churchill throughout the war and succeeded Sir Anthony

Eden after the Suez crisis in 1957, stood in Parliament in Cape Town, South Africa in 1959 and said he saw even if they did not that the Wind of Change Was Blowing through Africa he was once asked on television what was the secret of success for anyone in politics. Without hesitation he responded: "Managing events, dear boy, managing events." This was the leader who had handled disputes between Generals Eisenhower and Montgomery as Minister in North Africa in World War II, who sorted out the 1956/1957 disagreement with Eisenhower as US President over the Suez invasion by France and Britain (thankfully for me because I was just beginning my national service at that time in the Royal Air Force), and who built 100 000 new homes in the early 50s as Churchill's Minister of Housing. This was the Prime Minister who finally fell from office over the Profumo Affair because he was proud to trust his colleague's word above all else, triggering in this instance events he could not manage as they unravelled.

Our own events have always seemed, to put it mildly, much less momentous than Harold Macmillan's somehow, or even the fate of the fish that went up as a shoal and came down again as a shower but the message he gave was clear. Success lies in the management of events or issues as they have been called earlier here in Graffito 95. But simply surviving destabilising events by clever management as so many inferior politicians can often be seen to do was scarcely a worthwhile way to spend a lifetime. Rather the challenge is managing such events as confront us all, the shower of fish suddenly swept up from the sea falling into our gardens, to advantage against the vision that is held of what difference one wishes to make in life that matters. The word of an expert to explain an event is one thing, but what to do next? Where are we truly headed? Jim Davidson in Great Yarmouth knew he got his start in life as a comedian right on just such a pier; he felt others could do the same and that comedy needed a nursery like Great Yarmouth pier even in the 21st century. I feel the same about the Suffolk wine growers too. And of course about every young supervisor crossing the Rubicon from follower to group leader, shouldering responsibility for the first time for the success of a team of others.

The shortfall in Harold Macmillan's quick fire response then was not to indicate how it was possible to be seen to be a wise manager of events, rather than glib. Macmillan knew only too well that managing

events was the precondition of survival and political survival was the necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving something truly worthwhile. Most of us want to share with our leaders a real sense of purpose, which that leader very often articulates far better than we are able but that talent does not make it less of a common purpose. And the great leader is the one who can lead us through dire emergencies and crises without losing sight of that purpose and always helping us to keep it in focus too.

From Reg Revans we took the vision of action learning, and we like to feel that our persistent determination to manage events against that framework can be cause to make him feel proud as it most surely does my colleagues and I another decade on.

Graffito 103

Q + P = L ... Questions First

We surprised ourselves with hindsight how long it took us to stand Reg Revans equation on its head and start our continuing debates about adult learning amongst managers with Questions First ... Reg Revans always writes $L = P + Q$ of course.

It was a revivalist meeting on the beach at Coolangatta in Queensland Australia, where the MBA had been crafted in the early 1980s, that got the process going with a vengeance in 2000. The cadre, or 'network bowtie' as it is called in the literature, that flocked to the revivalist cause have since become known as the Revisionists in our local action learning patois. They have created more deep thinking than most uprisings in the 35 year history of IMC as named and under its previous name as the Institute of Scientific Business. They have been led by an unashamed Creator Innovator from an armchair rather than on the field of action, but none the less significant for that. But like the construct of most if not all Creator Innovators, the revisionists have passed on leaving the idea as still a work in progress.

The substantive point I am getting to is that most innovation has arisen not from philosophic discourse at IMCA but from response to questions posed by managerial learners. Ironically few if any of those had asked why, if Questions and Responsive Actions are the essence

of managerial learning, do we not philosophically start from Questions as opposed to Programmed Knowledge?

What the Revisionists asked us to do was to authorise them to invite all future managers joining programs at IMCA and the University of Action Learning to be given the option to create a self-directed curriculum of their own based on some 12 Questions. They would need to be coherently linked to show a learning progression but that learning progression would be open to the manager to determine in discussion with Faculty members.

The idea was at once both straightforward and revolutionary in its implications for the way we all worked. Accordingly rather than apply the classic principles of innovation – to encourage the revisionists to prove it to us all – it was instead given the royal treatment. It was immediately treated with the utmost respect and although we were all uncertain how to institutionalise it, we institutionalised it. And like all inspired ideas that also have the benefit of simplicity, it took off in a quite unexpected direction. Its advocates had suggested we would take the world by storm if we told all parties that they could achieve their awards by answering 12 self-directed Action Learning Questions (ALQs.). What happened was that although some of that went on the real revolution was in the design of assignments across the world without great mention of the big idea. It became a part of the going concern without much ado.

The biggest challenge as it turned out was how to assess what emerged, especially at Masters and doctoral levels. And this was compounded by the Revisionists themselves because not content with their great idea they also wanted to throw the global marking structures and pass grades into ferment. That was very much a step too far for quite a few, not least the friendly computer resources which had learnt to differentiate between US marks and International marks as we called them when working out averages for weighting etcetera, but had not been programmed to allocate marks on the basis of semantic differentials. It could of course be done, but what about the examiners' challenge in getting the semantics standardised around the globe. (Actually the rudiments had been available already for a decade or more prescribing different levels of praise to be accorded in the written feedback messages Associates received, but they were still on a relatively undisciplined basis.)

The assessment issues aside, the substantive issue quickly became how a

series of 12 discrete Action Learning Questions, no matter how carefully selected, could at the same time encompass the breadth of management understanding usually expected and accomplish intellectual depth. Nowhere was this more troublesome than at doctoral level. Yet the more we pondered, and encouraged the institutionalised structure to toil in the fields so we got good examples to critique, the more it became clear that what we were about was not really new at all; just an idea with its own rhetoric and momentum.

Some decade earlier, colleagues working to include the speed and percentage completion of Masters by Research in Training & Development had hit upon, piloted and made a great success of what they called Interim Research Papers or IRPs. Essentially they were a sequential and cumulative series of chapters that all focused on a single topic and eventually combined to create the Masters' thesis. Some MBA programmes around the globe had emulated this approach to creating their final dissertation. But all had been focussed on a single issue or theme, whilst the 12 ALQs in Revisionist theory could be on almost anything worthwhile, except for the first and the last which were based on Where Am I Starting and What Have I Learnt and Accomplished respectively.

The second learnt area for us was what we called the European Doctoral model that we have taken from Lund University in Sweden but which was widespread on the continent of Europe. Here the candidate was actively encouraged to undertake research in up to five discrete areas and to ensure the results were published in recognised journals. Then the articles themselves were tabled for the doctoral degree.

Finally, for more than a decade managers had been given the opportunity to make explicable their career long learning and writings, both professional and academic as may be, in what we had always termed an Explication. This route to action learning implied that the ALQs had already been posed and addressed and the outstanding questions arising were What had been learnt, How did that learning relate to the body of knowledge at large, and finally What generalisations can be made of future benefit to others?

In all the Revisionist excitement these three in situ structures had taken both single and multiple foci for their questions, and also taken questions not yet asked as well as those already answered and calling for considered reflection. Yet for the customer it was not déjà vu.

There was a stir in the air and a spring in the step of many a manger on our programmes when they were invited to highlight the ALQs they wanted to address and to share them with their peers at work and sharing in their action learning exploration. And bundling, as with the European doctoral model, was quickly able to ensure the depth that was sought was achieved.

Graffito 104

Vibes Clients and Academics

Not all clients come in cuddly packages. Some come bristling with assumptions and expectations that we cannot honour and professionally we should turn them away. But the evidence is that we seldom do. Rather we seek to explain to them and ourselves why their assumptions and expectations are inappropriate. After all, surely there will more joy in action learning circles over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons accepting us for what we truly are?

Perhaps the least pleasant encounter of the decade came from the most unlikely of sources, one of the world's largest and most successful hospitality enterprises. But it all began with a charm offensive, glad handing as only the smoothest humbugs know how. The enterprise had hundreds of thousands of employees globally, so we all thought and we were boldly informed, this was a client worth having. They could unlock the door to many a fascinating action learning programme and operate all over the globe in a wide diversity of cultures. Our own IMCA structures in myriad countries around the globe were eminently fitted for the challenge. And at the time we were working together with a well respected university institution in a joint partnership for the conduct of programmes.

The best starting point was clearly to bring together the human resource development team around the world, that advised franchisee and own establishment line managements alike. So we were commissioned, or so we thought, to launch what had been designed as two year Masters programmes in Virtual Training & Development. Client staffs flew in from around the globe to meet with us in Buckingham and our university partners were assembled too.

But there seemed to be a misunderstanding. The client had thought that as a mega enterprise we would see the first Workshop as a taster, not a commitment, and that he did not expect to be paying for the services we were providing. None of his global colleagues, he informed us, had yet made up their minds to join any programme as such. Oh dear. Always stay calm was the slogan, so we did and just rolled on anyway. As fortune would have it the ringmaster who had sought to hoodwink us was not too highly esteemed by most of the assembled colleagues, indeed not at all by some! So it was readily possible by offering opportunities that were ideally suited for their purposes to win the day ... to make the sale. Now its not that one for one moment objects to a roll out sales process such as eventuated, but the sheer audacious deception of springing it on us almost took our breath away. Almost!

From that set of some 20 individuals, this day two are within our walls at IMCA as the most stalwart colleagues imaginable.

The audacity did not stop there. Shortly a brochure appeared offering our global services under a corporate framework with the company supremos name on the Foreword, without mention of us at all. And more was to come. The university partners went into direct collaboration with the client and excluded us altogether. Then came the bad debt, the lawyers allegations that we had mentioned our relationship, that Associates' assignments were copyright to the enterprise and more.

This was not incidentally the first occasion on which a university partner had taught us a brutal lesson in marketplace mud wrestling. One enlightened Vice Chancellor set up a massive Senate majority to work with IMCA on a joint pattern of programmes only to have the whole enterprise scuppered by the local Dean. But on that occasion matters were even more distressing, because our faculty went over to the university team when they too cut us out of the client relationship. Our client originally, our programme designs and hussled off the contract.

The reason why both universities could behave in the way they did and the clients encourage them in their behaviours, was that the very nature of our brand in management development was weaker than theirs. But it was more than that surely? It says something very profound about the marketplace for higher education that society led by government has created and sustained. At its most ridiculous, in

the heady days of Thatcherism, I was asked by her civil servants in the Department of Education & Science why we wished to persist in what we were about when the universities so apparently disapproved. I explained that the Department of State concerned had just published a Report indicating that there were serious defects in the way the universities went about meeting the professional educational needs of managers and that we addressed these with great support from industry in the way we were going about it. They observed that was as it may be, but why did we not all persuade the universities to change their ways instead of challenging them as they got it wrong in the marketplace. We pointed out we had just left the very universities concerned to start our new institution because we had not found reform from within a real possibility in our lifetimes. Well that's as may be, they said, and proceeded to allocate more funding to the universities. On another occasion, a Thatcherite Minister of State for Higher Education and a neighbouring MP of mine to boot (and there have been some 20 now in our working relationship in the UK which goes a long way towards showing what sort of a priority it gets from politicians) asked me what I expected him to do: "Create a free market in higher education?" Well yes but no. Just create a marketplace that is not run by a cartel.

And in a world like that, low priority, deeply immersed in assumptions that the universities are fine simply because they attract distinguished scholars and inventors, few if any sanctions for moral turpitude or intellectual arrogance Is it surprising that there is no honour in respect of relationships with colleagues and with clients? I think not. And even more amazingly the behaviours would almost certainly be held up as an example of competitive forces at work rather than monumental bullying and grand larceny of intellectual property.

Regrettably, as I write I have still not come across a single country in the world where higher education markets seriously attempt to encourage access by innovators, attempt to encourage thinking outside the box in making provision. The phenomenon is similar to the blind adherence in so many countries to free medical services at a time when the number of ever longer living, hi tech dependent ageing citizens is rising beyond any scope of control. Catastrophe theory offers a clear insight if not a clear understanding of the likely outcomes.

Shelf Life Notice

In 1998 my colleagues in IMCA globally were surveyed by one of our elder statesmen from Australia to seek an answer to What Next? There were a great many observations, from the questionnaire sample which was heavily biased towards Australian respondents from the human resources management area. But the conclusion was that I had been in the chair too long, and I certainly could not disagree with that. I had. It certainly had not been the same job throughout but I had been in pole position. I had to move along and some different individual or team had to take up the running.

To my colleagues pleasure, as he informed the feedback session in Buckingham that year, it all seemed surreal. Here was I agreeing that I had to go. And this was just in the midst of major discontinuities with university alliances and on the threshold of IMCA's own initiative in Colorado that led to the establishment of the University of Action Learning. It was not a matter of timing in the context of current events that made it necessary to pass over the baton, it was mainly the dispiriting and deeply disabling disease of déjà vu.

It is not all that often perhaps that those who pass the end of their shelf life get the opportunity to help craft their succession plan, but I was not invited to undertake that role; I was instructed that I had so to do. It was the widespread opinion that I was indispensable to the transition if not to the purposes of action learning. Not for the first time in my career the requirement was to analyse, capture and improve upon the performances that I put in.

As chance would have it, actually more than chance really because he volunteered, one key element in the succession fell easily and readily into place. That was the professional and academic leadership role, seated in the chair at the Professional and Academic Board. The individual we found was truly distinguished in his chosen profession of hospitality and tourism, and that inter alia made him both customer focussed and internationally oriented. For him the curriculum and the educational purpose had to be accomplished in such a manner that clients were in the driving seat, without a hint of intellectual arrogance. Such a stance is seldom available except in one who has already scaled the dizzy heights of academic success. He had

also held chairs in two of the more progressive but nonetheless traditional universities. So his credentials as a rebel were secure also.

He was elected immediately and in doing so took what must have been one of the greatest career risks to date in his life. Because IMCA's ability to honour its 5 year initial terms (and he has just been re-elected for a second 5 years by acclamation from 2003) was based on income generated, he had to make sure that clients stepped forward and joined the learning processes.

The second element in my skills set seemed to have been combining a shrewd understanding of finances along with my professional and academic activities. The challenge was could the new man arriving assume in the fullness of time both roles or was it going to be necessary to find a working ally at the top of the enterprise. And we were not talking a management accountant role, rather a financial engineering role on a small but nevertheless global scale.

The What Next scenario required doing considerably better than we had done in the first 38 years of our existence and the first 16 years of action learning membership qualifications. We had survived, graduated thousands across the globe, become the major force in action learning anywhere to be found, but much of the world did not know of our existence and we had never achieved the recognition for our work that we all felt it deserved. All the normal stuff in fact. But in particular, as with all networks it ebbed and it flowed. There were very serious suggestions afoot that we should abandon the network status and accept that IMCA needed strong central ownership and an end to multinational collaboration. Such ideas had much support but not from potential investors alas; support came from members of the network who saw it as a way to gain access to greater support for their own particular ends in their own idiosyncratic marketplace.

But the centripetal pressures did arrive by another logic, of course, by technological determinism and the creation of our in-house Corporate University service known as Socrates – of which more later. These initiatives became the third unique band that held IMCA together around the globe, a common technological platform crafted in the USA and available for all. This third band added to the philosophical strength we all drew from action learning as a persecuted and misunderstood better way forward, and the patterns of global accreditations from London and Washington for our qualifications and awards.

As this third volume goes to press I have reached Shelf Life + 5, and am frankly pleased with the progress. The professional and academic leadership and the programme accreditations now present in IMCA and at the universities we manage far exceeds that which we brought to bear in the earlier years. Socrates is truly the manifestation and the delivery system for all we wished to achieve for so long. It has the ability to accomplish the goals of action learning with an order of magnitude that would leave our founding inspiration Reg Revans well pleased.

And the financial engineering aspect of our network affairs is also on the move. It has not yet reached resolution but a robust pattern of self funding has emerged after the searing heat of investment in the Internet platforms and the Global Registry structures.

Yet we scarcely expect the financial engineering challenges to recede as the professional and academic ones have. In the free market for higher education within which we compete against all comers, margins will always be tight when investment challenges arise. Our only true answer must be volume sales since our public sector colleagues normally receive their capital as donations from society via governmental budgets. The continuing secret of competitiveness has to be distinctive competence and preferably uniqueness as well. If there is nothing distinctive or unique about action learning, or accreditations or the Internet taken separately, and they can scarcely be, it must necessarily be the way they hold together. But the blinkered pursuit of volume will surely destroy the soul of IMCA. For so long as we seek to be multinational as the cultural expression of what action learning always implies, exemplified in small groupings or sets working out their own preferred way of doing things, the synthesising of the global network is what it will all continue to be about. And that challenge is not unique to IMCA. It sums up the challenge of much in society today, the respect of local identity whilst at the same time being able to bring broadscale resources to bear. Sounds tough going for the next crew in.

Theories of Baggage and Howard Price

The mention of Howard Price here breaks a 37 year old rule that I have kept throughout this Graffiti series, and clearly requires some justification. He was a Volvo logistics manager working at Dover at the time he burst into our consciousness, but was an IMCA MBA graduate of good standing anyway, and perhaps we should have guessed. The occasion had been the 'free offer' of participation on an Advanced Diploma in Management Action Learning which was to be conducted in 1993/1994. Its purpose was to brush up our competences in the field, and six of the usual suspects assembled for the occasion plus two others wholly off the wall. One was a South African dentist working in the area of managerial psychology and the second was Howard.

His place in IMCA folklore was secured by a polite, in confidence, request to the set as to whether he was allowed to say exactly what he really thought about what we were all about and the way we designed, marketed and sold action learning. We said "Yes of course", little realising what he was about to suggest.

What he did was to project us forward some 5 years to how we might in his view look then. He did not anticipate the patterns we had at the time continuing. He saw quite clearly that action learning is an elegant form of process consultancy and in our case it had a qualification attached to drive it forward and give some structure to it. He did not see the qualification as especially helpful in achieving the proper goals of action learning. He suggested they should be abandoned. In their place IMCA should be constructed as a Consultancy business.

Whether he was right or whether he was wrong, he was challenging the baggage the founding Faculty members all brought with them. IMCA was meant to be an institution, even a Business School, which believed educational purposes could be institutionalised and that qualifications were a significant ingredient in achieving effectiveness. We had after all arrived at the situation we were in as dissident Faculty members not as wayward consultants. We were trying to redefine what Faculty members did to assist students.

We had stayed with the notion of selling what we offered by the programme (later in North America we were to sell it by the credit

course) and we expected Faculty to facilitate a learning process. We expected the body of knowledge to be requisite but definitely indispensable to the effectiveness and relevance of learning occurring. Admittedly we had raised the esteem of students in our own eyes and in their's too by calling them Associates instead of students. We had insisted that the curriculum was focussed on their issues not a normative textbook. But it could never be enough. By staying with the notion that what practising managers needed in mid career for example was a brush up of their education per se we were taking action learning away from its proper place in adult learning.

He certainly made us think. It was not long since IMCA had shared its marketing and sales ownership with a Consultancy enterprise, Doctus plc. It had not been one which signed up for action learning as its consultancy process; indeed quite the reverse. Its consultancy delivered custom built preconceived answers. They had wanted to work with us as an extension not a threat to or replacement of their extant range of services. Here was Howard suggesting that we should see our role for the future as replacing the Doctus style of consultancy rather than running a Business School.

In the jargon of our marketing classroom, Howard was querying our product/market strategy, not the ingredients of what we were seeking to accomplish. He argued that qualifications distorted what we were about, what we said to clients and what we asked our Associates to undertake. And the reason we were locked in to the products/services formatting such as Bachelor/MBA was our origins and the baggage that that meant we had.

In every sense about baggage we felt he must be right. We wanted to deliver educational programmes using action learning. We believed that the qualification was a measure of quantum of learning as well as a motivation/interim finishing line that helped us along the way. We knew also that the achievement of a degree level award and the attendance at a suitable ceremony with its own *rites de passage* was very satisfying indeed to the Associates-cum-Graduands that our managers were. Their families loved it and shared in the sense of achievement, and no recounting of a project at work/day at the office experience could match or rival the graduation feeling, even the photograph in the robes. But it was baggage and the \$64 000 question posed was could action learning achieve a greater quantum

of contribution as a consulting process than as a qualification programme framework.

Suffice it to say, we did not answer the question and, like Pilate, Howard did not stay for the answer. But we were forcefully reminded of exactly how fragile our product/market strategies were. Even if we did not undertake action learning consultancy per se and stayed solely with educational programmes in our determination to challenge the universities with 'another way' surely others would or might? And of course they have, indeed were already doing so at the time Howard threw out the challenge.

We did not change our product/market strategy. We have held with and on to the founders' notion that we are to be offering professional development that can benefit strongly from the framework of a qualifying institution. Meanwhile Faculty members in their private existences conduct all manner of action learning processes without qualifications only after the event seeking credit maps perhaps into the formal qualifications structures we provide. And that seems to be justified because of the sheer diversity of the challenges that are presented.

The value of Howard's intervention was never underestimated and it was a salutary reminder of how little prophets are recognised in their own country. Howard came from outwith the likely suspect circle; we were not defensive or protective when he argued his points. We were almost dare I say academic in our approach. But at the end of the day it strengthened our resolve and confirmed our commitment to the baggage we came aboard with. We truly wished to see an alternative, Revans' vision, for mid-career management and professional development here on earth and flourishing.

Graffito 107

Frustrations with CPD and Renewal

Talk of Howard Price and baggage carried in Graffito 106 necessarily raises some other issues of less momentous import but significant in the Revansian vision sequence nevertheless. I refer in particular to the notion of lifelong learning and to our institutional efforts to design instruments to facilitate it and give it a fillip. If ever Howard had got

his hands on this area he could have had a field day with our assumptions.

At the time we seriously began running our own qualification programmes in the early 1980s it was customary to assert that we all needed to improve our reflector learning skills as managers because by and large we were too pragmatic and often lost out in the rush and often exciting frenzy of actually doing something. This being the assumed case, all we needed to do was to create for our alumni and indeed for our Faculty a series of compulsory reflective occasions. From the outset we invited all and sundry to engage in Five Year Renewal as we grandly termed it. Later we added the A+ Review of the Outcomes of each Graduate's action learning project, dissertation or thesis. We also set aside time for story telling within the global commonwealth at twice a year face to face sessions gathering hundreds from around the world at not inconsiderable expense to them.

The natural patterns for personal learning reviews in most enterprises in advanced nations are quite well established. Bosses supposedly in the best position to make an assessment of how well a subordinate is performing frequently are expected to conduct an annual round. Most lately these have been elevated in a democratic, higher educated age, to a 360 degrees approach, where the subordinate also shares with the boss-person what s/he thinks looking upwards. As observed it is seemingly a natural pattern but of course it is awash with contradictions and unlikely assumptions. The most effective method for many continues to be an objective assessment instrument that is then used as a basis for discussion between the parties or the team members rather than an up/down/up approach even with 360 degree enhancement.

We have persevered with offering our 5 Year Renewal and A+ approach for alumni and for Faculty despite its modest uptake, with less than a third of those eligible. For those who do participate it meets a very real need. But what of the remainder, the two thirds who graduate and say au revoir but are not motivated by who we are or what we offer to make any such formal return visit? Well clearly life has moved on for them all one way or another, and get them into a room together and they will be more than happy to share outcomes and disasters and to pick up the old vocabulary as those who never put it down.

The need seems to be for a proactive approach to stay with the pragmatists and the activists. And we have never mastered the art or science if that it be, of designing an approach that proacts. It must almost certainly be more than a phone call, and certainly more than a spammed email campaign. It probably involves an ambassadorial role with field visits as well as a social dimension. And this analysis is based on the belief that IMCA has something significant to offer to and gain from its graduates.

Quintessentially IMCA believes it should continue working with and amongst its graduates in their changing employment, providing action learning development and qualifications for those in their workplaces. After all what is good for the goose is good for the gander. Such an approach would probably be far more effective than cold canvassing sales visits and the recounting of second or third hand case histories of achievement.

And as chance would have it, because it was chance, work took me regularly to Ireland where a South African MBA graduate was personally following up his development after a break with doctoral studies. I tracked him down to discover that in all his time working with us he had only ever met one of us, an important individual though that was. I yarned about his doctorate and he asked for advice on this and that; and it gradually dawned that the manager I was talking with headed a very substantial international family enterprise. He most certainly had individuals in that organization who were already and could still better follow in his learning footsteps on the MBA. They ended up in a consortium programme with a high tech Canadian enterprise in Ontario. But the initiatives had been from him to us, and it must have been like pushing water uphill. One swallow does not, they say, make a summer but the sun was certainly shining brightly in Limerick.

The major success we have had with Faculty members is via the long established custom of story telling, which has of course taken on great contemporary significance in many enterprises as they explore and seek to manage what they term the culture of their organization. The most colourful stories are still told around the bar at night or its non-alcoholic equivalents from Swiss mountain cheese restaurants to Colorado diners. But because we have common challenges in helping others learn we have a common agenda around the globe. It must surely be impossible for anyone who has regularly heard tales of

corporate structures and their politics to tutor the simple rationalist approaches in management. The recounting of how CEOs lead from diverse starting points to create and motivate ambitious or disaffected staffs as they go through one more restructuring or downsizing.

The sales situation often provokes the most interest because those who have succeeded are encouraged to generalise from their particular results. They are far more fruitful than the endless litany of frustrations with academic and educational regulators which also get their air time. The most exhilarating elements for most of us are when a new design for a programme has simply emerged. The facility with which we have over the past four decades ensured that our institutional structures can respond based on trust in the Faculty's initiative is exhilarating and often for the newcomer rather breathtaking. So much discretion they ask?

Yet therein one suspects lies the true answer to personal renewal, five yearly or otherwise. How in a post communist age we continue with a 5 year cycle is a mystery since they clearly showed more than any the futile nature of a predetermined time scale for planning. Renewal surely arises from addressing the next challenge as much as reflecting on the past, indeed probably more so. The next generation of leaders in IMCA will have to do far better than we did in designing the ways to help.

Graffito 108

Learning Outputs into Action Outcomes

I recall spending a very great deal of time in my dotage seeking to understand the difference between an output and an outcome. After much guidance and many a doubting question I was instructed that an output is something that can normally be expected to arise as a result of being engaged in a process, whilst an outcome is what happens because of the process. To use the language of management research, an output could well be a seminar paper, a refereed article or a book; an outcome could well be that someone else joining in or hearing of the seminar or reading a book might as a result do something differently in their lives. The researcher/author might himself do something differently. If this is a valid differentiation, or

indeed if that is too bold an assertion but we can adopt it here as our own distinctive definition of the difference, we seem to have an important point to address.

The quest for knowledge per se, for a learning output, is inherent in most if not all of us in the professional and academic world. It is what has normally attracted us in the first instance. But it must be a manifestly philanthropic institution that allows most of us in life the opportunity to spend our lives doing such a thing. Rather, most of the learning we seek to undertake has an implied or even an explicit purpose. Sharpening up the purposes or the hoped for action outcomes of learning has been one of the greatest concerns of my teaching career. It became a great concern as a result of my marketing background and my determination to understand what leads adults who are successfully pursuing careers to participate in yet further formalised learning approaches. That fascination had begun at Cranfield when I was placed in charge, *faute de mieux*, of Continuing Education for Managers in 1976 (see Graffito 46 & 47).

Like most grand learning propositions, they begin with curiosity brought on by a pressing need. If our children are smitten with a dire illness, we wish to know all about it and when we reach the boundaries of such knowledge as there may be available we wish to explore the missing elements. How can it be not simply alleviated but slowed down in its effects, cured or avoided in the first place? The questions abound. For managers, and I have been no exception, there are personal struggles with leadership, with organization, with understanding the nature of the technological and transformational systems we are involved with. And those transformational systems include changing attitudes, implementing new workplace approaches as well as getting the bugs out of operating systems.

I have now had the opportunity to see the evaluations of some 20 cohorts of IMCA graduates at the annual congregations we hold to confer degrees and professional membership. The outcomes they have highlighted have surprisingly been almost the same across two decades and across all five continents where we have worked. From all their action learning studies they wish to see implementation of conclusions reached, or outputs from their labours, and they believe that they are normally only partially able to accomplish such implementation. They are convinced that some other party will frustrate the desired outcomes, and even if such obstacles are

overcome or found to be illusory, they will still need a wholesome team to accomplish them since they cannot move mountains on their own.

But I suggested earlier that this all relates to why adults following successful careers want to attend structured courses. They are seeking self confidence, self determination, external endorsement, a reduced feeling that they are in some way uniquely entrapped in their organizations. They want to hear that it is OK to feel the way they do, and they want to hear it from wise Faculty members and from fellow travelling adults. The cynics sometimes say they wish to help themselves to feel superior to others by comparing themselves with fellow participants, and certainly some corporate cultures tend to suggest their staffs are supermen and women. But that is not my normal experience, it is very occasionally the case.

They compare one with another just how life is in the workplace, and in the great majority of instances recharge their batteries for the next challenge ahead. They look for action outcomes rather than defeatist notions that its all too difficult. They have distanced themselves from the micro politics of their organizations and taken a broader view, a wider perspective, on what the contemporary workplace is all about. Complaints about organisational politics are no way to advance the cause. If politics must be played play it well, and if it can be minimised so much the better. But it will scarcely go away and work goes on nonetheless.

The drive to accomplish, to implement, to have in mind and to achieve action outcomes is the true mark of a manager. It offers one of the most profound but simplest sequences of questions at an interview or in the course of normal conversation: What are you hoping to achieve? How are you setting about it? How are you mobilising resources? What will you do with the benefits of the outcomes once you have accomplished them? Has the respondent got such hopes? If it is a job interview or an interview to assess whether an individual can benefit from a programme of studies with us, the very tenor of the responses as well as their substance tells much.

In several if not all respects those of us who gathered around the action learning totem in 1982 and those who subsequently joined our ranks have failed to achieve what we hoped for. We have all too frequently been diverted by the slings and arrows and failed to realise our true potential. The approach we have is so manifestly able to attract adults in their successful careers that we should have reached

the stars by now. Millions not thousands should have passed through our portals, working on their action outcomes if we ourselves had expected more of ourselves. Our very acts of satisficing in this manner are a salutary lesson of course for all, and a reminder of the need for a strong driver in our lives. At work it will frequently be the bottom line/the bankers, sometimes just the boss. But great accomplishment of action outcomes arises when we are motivated to achieve again and again and again. And that can never come solely from within ourselves. It always needs external stimuli and effective management structures and leaders know that only too well. Indeed they will often be synthetic, deliberately engineered, just to accomplish the continuing purpose we all have for renewal and re-energisation.

Weight-watchers and AA know precisely what is required – not learning outputs, but action outcomes. And they work in groups to achieve them.

Graffito 109

Outland Revenues

... Talking of outputs and outcomes easily leads to observations on the world's tax gatherers. For the gatherer the output is revenues in their national bank and for the politicians which unleash them the outcomes are what they care to do with the proceeds. But never was the law of unintended outcomes more clearly apparent than when levels of taxation (i) make it virtually impossible for most private individuals to accumulate capital let alone pass it on to their children, and (ii) make most corporate persons seek to locate in the most favourable environment from which to drive their activities.

On the grand scale, the United Kingdom and New Zealand were for much of the past decade deliberately able to provide a far more favourable earnings and investment climate than many continental European countries or Australia respectively. The UK went out of its way to ensure a positive and supportive pattern of taxation for the financial services delivered from the City of London. Those countries often disparagingly known as offshore tax havens such as Guernsey, Gibraltar and Bermuda take this pattern of differential trade advantage in international business to its logical conclusion on a

permanent basis. They resolve to raise their revenues to achieve socio-political goals by other patterns of taxation, and why shouldn't they? Whilst they are frequently maligned for acting as the locations for money laundering by criminal groups much of such verbiage is hypocritical and for public consumption. The sources of funding behind the tragedy of September 11th 2001, for instance, were shown to be right there in the heartlands of the critics and not in any of the maligned countries.

Our global educational activities working with local partners and institutions meant that income was arising in a very wide range of currencies and investments were similarly being made in a wide range. We regularly talked of Malaysian ringitts, Singaporean, New Zealand, Australian, Canadian, US and Hong Kong \$, the Papua New Guinea pula and the Vanuatu vatu. The South African rand was a major headache along with the Kenyan shilling, and until recently the Finmark, Belgian franc and Dutch and Antilles guilder. The Brazilian real and the Argentinian peso caused endless difficulties.

The simplistic commercial scenario suggested that we were an activity with a UK origin and that everyone should pay fees in UK Sterling, no matter how their own currency might fluctuate against sterling. This always gave rise to problems because of the major differentials in purchasing power. For instance the typical Canadian earns typically much less when compared to sterling than a UK resident, and a Malaysian very much less. But living in those countries is very much less expensive. The cost of a motor car and of petrol is much lower as is the cost of housing. In Malaysia food is very much cheaper and a taxi fare in an admittedly poor quality vehicle is minimal. So to ask globally for the sterling equivalent at any moment in time would have meant wildly excessive fees for many e.g. South Africa, and substantial fluctuations from time to time. Yet we did for many years pursue this very approach to the detriment of the spread of action learning around the world.

It was the Asian financial crisis which saw the collapse of any sensible hope that a global sterling price could be maintained. And where the currency remained pegged as the Hong Kong \$ did to the US\$ the consequences for economic activity in Hong Kong were pronounced. Hong Kong, and Singapore which also held much of its value against sterling and the US\$, became high cost areas and had to transform the patterns of their economic activities.

For ourselves the consequence was that we had to source just about all the services locally in order to continue in business and subsequently to expand. There was no leakage between one country and the next for the provision of our services so differential pricing was realistic. The simplistic model of our global trading had disappeared and in its place had emerged one where the outlandish taxation approaches of discrete governments could be managed. Under the inspired guidance of a Wharton School financial services adviser on our Faculty we created in effect a Global Treasury that received all revenues from around the world under licence agreements, and only after the sensible meeting of global expenses did the revenues accrue to individual enterprises in particular tax domains.

The technical term for where we ended up is tax planning with minimisation as the proper intent so that the maximum of revenues arising could be redeployed in the several not for profit institutions we managed globally. Even here incidentally there is a substantive distinction in several countries. In Canada and the USA for instance a not for profit company without any shareholders is exempt from tax; in the UK for reasons best known to nobody alive today it is not. In the UK a professional subscription paid to a not for profit organization is tax deductible so long as no benefit other than membership arises and if it does some genius sits down to arbitrate on what proportion is which and which proportion is not! Even taking on charitable status still leaves the institutions concerned less favourably treated in the UK than in North America. One of the most beneficial locations for life assurances is Prince Edward Island in Canada, for incorporations Delaware and Nevada take a lot of beating in the USA, and Panama is still a great flag to fly on a ship at sea. So the litany goes on ...

The arrival of the Internet and the debates about the collection of sales taxes for items bought on the web is just the latest manifestation of the jungle in which tax gatherers roam and where all sensible multinational enterprises take care to minimise their disbursements.

We did not set out to minimise any tax burden arising from our educational programmes. We simply fell over the need and the opportunity as our nation of origin sought ever more deliberately to undermine the inherent dynamics of business growth. We are a miniscule instance of the unintended consequences of tax gathering

in the UK. By preventing or severely restricting the accumulation of capital by individuals and corporations within the territory the government itself puts itself in the position of all seeing and all knowing investor. Public expenditure becomes the way in which investment is made and its goals are all too frequently nothing to do with wealth creation. Frequently, and in many instances, they are to do with wealth redistribution. But all too frequently they go to service sectors kept under government control and politicised management such as health care, education and pensions. In each of these areas of state provision the instances of waste and ineptitude are horrifying. Which is not to argue that there is no role for the state to ensure well regulated contexts for such vital services to be performed, or to argue that privatisation is the answer to all the world's challenges, but it is to argue that the state in our own humble experiences within education seems a force for bad not good. It deliberately frustrates great initiatives in the name of the order, quality and standards and manifests a belief that administrative bureaucracy is the way to achieve social goals.

The folk who could expend \$600 million dollars on the Lockerbie Disaster Legal Trial in The Hague are very much in charge of our affairs. Do we have any hope really? Admittedly, Margaret Thatcher and the collapse of the Soviet Union both shifted the paradigm; but it needs another severe jolt which for us in the European Union seems a long way off as that great dream, which I wholeheartedly espouse, moves in the opposite direction.

Graffito 110

Yukon and Cambridge On the Line

Whitehorse in the Yukon is home to two extended-family businesses and Northland Open University. Cambridge Online Learning is based in Barnsley in Yorkshire. They stand at opposite ends of the spectrum on how to get started in an enterprise.

The Yukon today boasts a one hour opticians and a video store, both begun on a shoestring by two brothers. There is a failure there too from a family wide attempt at placing vending machines at 30 locations around town. It could have worked but they had not

reckoned with the replenishment and maintenance cycles required. It was the younger of the two who saw the opportunity, working in opticians in Edmonton. He simply upped sticks and moved to Whitehorse and opened his store. To run a successful one hour opticians also had its issues. You need the equipment to craft and install the lenses into the customer's choice of frames, and what is called an eye doctor/ophthalmic optician on the premises. It's a professional field taking several years training, far more than is normally required. Getting such professionals to commit to Whitehorse for a lifetime is not easy and after an early successful relationship the brothers were stranded with none and nobody wanting to come either. As chance would have it Dupont had developed a machine that could test eyes but not detect eye disease. It seemed ideal for out of the way spots with trouble finding eye doctors aplenty or even at all.

The test results from the machine were doubled checked online in Alberta by a qualified eye doctor and the spectacles them created as per prescription. A local eye doctor competitor checked the process and could find no fault. But not so said the profession and Consumer Affairs in the territorial government. The eye doctor must be on the ground in the Yukon not at a distance and if no eye doctor was prepared to come to the Yukon the business of testing cannot be conducted. (As just discussed in Graffito 109 above, only an administrator could reach such a conclusion.)

Without an eye doctor or a machine to work with for measuring eyesight the business relied on making up prescriptions written elsewhere. It could not achieve turnover much in excess of \$Cdn 400 000 pa, so thought turned to synergetic diversification based on the resources available. The video store was one, but the smartest idea to emerge eventually was to manage the Shopping Mall in which the spectacles enterprise found itself. An ageing landlord made all of this possible. It transpired that perhaps the greatest talent to hand was completely trustworthy operational management of assets.

As if this initiative was not sufficiently unorthodox for the family, chance again had another turn. As long ago as 1976 colleagues from the Canadian School of Management in Toronto, where the Province of Ontario denied them the opportunity even to apply for degree awarding rights, had resolved to establish an out of Province university institution to whom credits could be transferred. This time

the federal government was forthcoming and agreed to the establishment of what is known as Northland Open University (NOU). Under Federal Letters Patent it was authorised to establish itself in Yellowknife in the North West Territories, and subsequently in Whitehorse in the Yukon to award degrees. And it has been doing so ever since, often to the chagrin of Provincial administrators since the Provinces of Canada have educational jurisdiction under the Constitution as repatriated from Westminster by Pierre Trudeau's government. One of the institutions to which it awarded degrees until 1990 was our own IMCB in England.

By 2002 the leaders of NOU were well advanced in years and in some instances in ill health and they resolved to ask IMCA to admit NOU as a Constituent Institution and thereby to accord it access to the global systems and services all institutions enjoy. It was our great pleasure so to do not least because of that early association but also because of the opportunities it afforded for our own growth and development as multinational partners around the world. The family presence in Whitehorse and the access to facilities in the Mall made an assumption of responsibility reasonably straightforward. Accreditation from Washington will be sought shortly so that NOU can play an increasingly significant role in our global work.

By complete contrast two other brothers are at work in Barnsley, South Yorkshire, the headquarters town of Arthur Scargill's National Union of Mineworkers in conflict with whom Mrs Thatcher made her reputation. The fairy godmother that eluded Arthur Scargill, in this case the European Union Social Fund, has touched them with a very magic wand indeed. Several millions have been made available to launch the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate's (UCLES) Graduate Certificate and Diploma programmes online for students from small and medium sized enterprises. It is delivered as an action learning process and has been credit mapped into the range of IMCA and University of Action Learning awards also available on the web.

Rather than modest beginnings, this enterprise began in grand style with ministerial contributions extolling the benefits of lifelong learning. And may it indeed prosper. Yet few things in life come easy and as we have seen so many times over the past 37 years students take awhile to consider which programme they wish to follow. There are no overnight mass enrolments to be had. A team of ten salesmen are visiting employers across the country to make their presentations

and to explain the merits of the UCLES's approach as opposed to that of the British Open or of Herriott Watt universities. They have certainly been able to leverage and in their turn add considerable value to the global campus created by IMCA and to draw on tutorial faculty from around the globe. And they have found that in their work they are meeting with quite other interests and needs for in-company and professional association's needs to make use of the site server so carefully created. And in Asia in particular there is growing demand for the services of UCLES' delivered on the web with local support workshops as well.

Both these brotherly endeavours, in quite disparate fields, demonstrate that you have to start somewhere in building a business but is never too clear at the outset where the real opportunities might finally occur. In neither case is it likely to be precisely where it was at first thought. To lose out on all eye doctors in the Yukon sounded like the writing on the wall, but iteration and persistence found a livelihood, somewhere for young children to grow up, and a respected role in the community. In Barnsley the evolving script is still in progress but the work is a brave attempt to bring a 21st century service industry to an old coal mining town in urgent need of new hope. May that prosper too, whether greatly or modestly. Regardless of the outcome, the endeavour will have been worthwhile and a life's education itself.

Graffito 111

ALI and Socrates – We Never Close

ALI and Socrates were both children of the Internet, IMCA's two grandest children. They were conceived as Website marketing and delivery platforms for our two discrete markets – individuals and corporate customers. ALI was the acronym for Action Learning Institute, and after three years we have abandoned the initial concept. Socrates however has gone from strength to strength and is still ascending.

The assumptions behind creating ALI as a web destination were those of the dot.com bonanza years ... we deceived ourselves as did millions more that if we created a destination that sung the praises of

action learning, what we had achieved and what our many thousands of graduates had achieved in their workplaces ... if we did all this the outcomes would include more individual applicants for our programmes. Multitudes across the world would go to search engines and type in as their key word '*action learning*'.

We invested a great deal of technical creativity into creating a good website so that those who did arrive could see for themselves whether it made good sense. We created an online Career Review questionnaire that, when submitted, would generate a personalised and focused response showing how IMCA's activities could indeed advance the individual's career.

I have already indicated that the initiative has been abandoned because it was ineffective. There were certainly a considerable number of hits at the site, but they were in the main the passingly curious. In particular we attracted those who already knew what action learning was about and appreciated our kindness in brushing up their knowledge and understanding. But it did not attract myriad clients or students to join with us to justify the expenditure. And the reasons with hindsight are not difficult to discern. The world is not full of Internet hungry managers seeking to search the web to find opportunities to learn by specifying their preferred learning processes. They are probably looking for Career or Professional Development, or for a Qualification such as an MBA which is a widely known and respected surrogate for a particular quantum of learning. Managers starting from a qualification search under MBA might well as a second order differentiator look at the learning processes on offer and decide that action learning is much to be preferred to sitting in class hearing lectures. IMCA might have been preferred because its services regardless of action learning were 100% on the Internet including full library access. Or even because it is less costly than many of the finer bricks and mortar schools.

There was also a second dilemma that students arriving from the Internet posed, especially via the Career Review questionnaire route. The suggestions we made to be most constructive were for small elements of programmes or courses and the ability to respond to ones and twos in such a manner using action learning processes was extremely limited. Frequently the response had to be ... wait for a few months until we are offering a programme where you can join with others and then you can address the need.

Socrates was built on a different assumption. It assumed that students (known as Associates) had *already* joined with IMCA or the University of Action Learning, or any of our other institutions around the globe. What they needed was a fully integrated campus that held all the coursewares, all the tutorial processes, all the marking structures and records, all the scope needed to access global literature with fine search engines ... all that and more available at their own PC 24 hours a day 365/6 days a year. We called it IMCA Socrates because the database structure which it comprises is wholly and utterly designed to allow managers to take a Socratic, questioning approach to their challenges at work and their own career development.

It also had one quite magnificent characteristic, a wizard. The wizard does much magic but most spectacularly s/he allows the entire campus and all its operating function to change their name and their looks. Each and every client organization can for a modest expenditure have their 'own' campus. And the database is more than willing, it is welcoming when the organization wishes to add its own courses and references to the quantum that we automatically supply.

The second magnificent characteristic of Socrates was that it contained all our hard earned accreditations, from Washington and London, and from ISO 9000 ... they were all integral to the service being offered.

The creation of Socrates permits the achievement for us all of a long held dream. We have always believed that our greatest contribution can be accomplished by embedding the action learning processes we espouse into the total managerial processes of an organization. We had been able to achieve it from time to time, and over time with major clients such as St Hellier Health Services and Allied Irish Banks in Europe and with National Grocers in Canada. But in each case the process had involved selling complete programmes. Socrates can of course achieve that but it can also offer each course within the programme for credit *towards* an award but with no requirement to take the whole programme there and then.

Socrates also deliberately enshrines our belief that the best business school any of us can ever attend is the place where we work *if* the processes of learning are sensibly designed and reinforced. Staff members at the workplace join with the Faculty tutors to act as

mentors and to ensure that the issues worked on are germane and actionable, and to give the necessary support to carry them through. In one significant instance the local trades union chapter was so impressed it established scholarships for its members to follow the programmes when company budgets were exhausted.

What we have designed and are now implementing with thousands of managers across Europe and North America, at an ever accelerating pace, is the comprehensive resourcing of any organization's own Corporate University, and today there are some 3000 across the world. There is not yet a competitor in sight. And there are no serious likely looking competitors offering these services the way we do. They have too much baggage from their extant paradigms of bricks and mortar, of in-post tenured faculty, of beliefs that there is a normative curriculum of which they are guardians ... a deeply held belief that they are the experts and that those who wish to learn cannot be expected to know how to learn without their expertise.

As an accredited global professional association in IMCA and as an accredited US university Socrates gives us a very powerful positioning indeed to institutionalise action learning in many an enterprise as its normal way of attending to management learning and continuous improvement.

Graffito 112

Bombie and the Noblesse of Scotland

My membership since 1998 as a Minor Baron in the Noblesse of Scotland, as announced in the *Edinburgh Gazette* in 2000, sprang from a chance remark by a lifelong friend of mine and an upstanding member of the Country Gentlemen's Association. He had a longstanding love of the older Rolls Royce cars and owned several and a grand home on the Holderness peninsular. He suggested that since my mother had been a Scot I should take an interest in some of the feudal baronies in Scotland which became available from time to time when old lands were sold normally to meet debts! Several such instances had arisen from the Lloyds' Underwriting Names debacle. He and I had a decade earlier enjoyed petitioning the College of Arms in London for our own families and for my old school Reed's,

for IMCA and, by referral, the Canadian School of Management in Toronto. So we had some considerable familiarity with the procedures. Barely 12 months after the thought the deed, or more precisely the disposition, was accomplished; I gained access to the lands of the Barony of Prestoungrange and its associated barony of Dolphinstoun whilst away working in Thailand. My name was changed in Hua Hin under the *Statutory Declarations Act, 1835*, from Wills to Prestoungrange and two delightful buffalo horns from that country became the official horns for my Baron Bailie and Baron Sergeand. I granted the Barony of Dolphinstoun in 1999 to my youngest son Julian, with Mathew taking the designation Younger of Prestoungrange as my heir.

It was a wondrous world that my sons and I now entered. Firstly we must ensure that my proper rights to title were registered in Sasine, the ancient feudal Land Records of Scotland dating back in utmost detail to the early 16th century. This we did with the aid of a Writer to the Signet (or WS), Scotland's own description for a Solicitor. And then we proceeded to ask Her Majesty The Queen's Lord Lyon of Scotland, Sir Malcolm Innes of Edingight, to Grant his Warrant authorising our personal Right to Scottish Arms. He so obliged after due process that mainly consisted of ensuring the pedigree of the two baronies and our right to them as recorded in Sasine. His Clerk and Recorder then set to work to suggest how the existing Wills' Family Arms could be embellished including our rights to the baronial chapeau. The outcome was that the Prestoungrange Arms included some coal and salt to represent its industrial past and the Dolphinstoun Arms a sheaf of wheat to represent its agricultural role.

The Grant of Arms was the symbolic recognition of the barons by the Crown. Once accorded that recognition, membership of the Convention of the Baronage of Scotland beckons irresistibly. It is the authority on all issues baronial including ceremonial dress in scarlet and ermine, proper forms of address as 'Much Honoured Baron', and was established on the initiative of an earlier Lord Lyon, himself a Scottish baron. Membership is only open to those who are recognised as barons by Lord Lyon and their immediate heirs. As might be expected it is a club, and a pressure group as required, with the delightful characteristic of holding its Summer and Winter Meetings at the various Seats of its members. Thus began a round of

elegantly hosted luncheon receptions and many fine old Scottish castles and homes all run on a strictly feudal and certainly yet politely 'undemocratic' basis, more like the conduct of affairs in the Tory party before the Scottish Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas Hume held office for the whole of the United Kingdom.

We in the Convention are currently and obviously much vexed by the ending of feudalism and feudal land tenure in Scotland. Scotland had the distinction of being the last feudal country in Europe. Fortunately, or unfortunately if you are a Scottish feudal lord, one of the earliest Acts of the re-convened Scottish Parliament in 2001 (it had been in abeyance since 1707 when the Act of Union with England and Wales was passed) was its abolition. What fate we now necessarily wonder lies in store for all Scottish nobles including the Minor Barons when they no longer draw their titles from the demonstrated ownership of historic lands as faithfully recorded in Sasine with feu duties attaching? Since the Act quite specifically provided for the continuation of the office of Lord Lyon and of the titles hitherto attached to the lands of feudal barons, but with the cessation of the Sasine's record of title in favour of the popular Land Registry system as used in England and Wales, it would seem elementary to a newcomer such as myself that those already inside the system should act wisely but firmly to protect its dignity. Noblesse oblige as they say. Surely the educational cartel that I have spent much of my working life at loggerheads with has taught me that much? Maybe say my feudal superiors, so maybe it remains.

One piece of shrewd advice however regularly emanates from the Clerk's desk at Lyon Court, where Lord Lyon sits. The lady concerned, normally described as the Lioness but never called that to her face, advises all feudal Nobles of Scotland to make sure they are seen as valued even if bizarre or eccentric members of the community in the area where their feudal writ traditionally ran. Ridicule and abolition of feudal titles is only likely to occur if the pattern is abused or exploited for financial gain as has, for instance, seemingly been the case in England with the titles of Lord of The Manor.

As a newcomer and as a marketer I have taken the Clerk's kindly given even if unsolicited advice to heart. I have quite deliberately sought to become and stay involved in life on the former baronial lands in an eccentric but not frivolous manner. And in writing my five year baronial plan in 1998, so to speak, I resolved in the spirit of the

age to go for CyberFeudalism. I deliberately sought to be the Virtual Baron of Prestoungrange, there as often as I can be but working hard from an elegant WebSite all the while.

It did not transpire quite like that. There certainly was and still is an exciting WebSite which gives access for one and all to the goings on. But on a very early visit I chanced to meet as my guide around the Industrial Heritage Museum a truly great enthusiast for Scottish History and she transformed my planned approach within a week. The old baronial lands are not one of the more prosperous corners of Scotland today. The coal mine which was the catalyst for the local economy flooded regularly and was eventually closed in 1967. After that the brickworks, the pottery and the brewery all closed and almost all the local employment base disappeared. The area has been given social and regenerative funding for some three decades now, but has not brought substantive industry back. It has simply alleviated the problems arising. The enthusiast's prescription was simple. As baron why don't you seek to do something to encourage economic growth, starting with visitors at the Museum itself, she asked. Sounded a tad ambitious, but why not? My Shelf Life critics said I needed a new challenge.

Graffito 113

With Heritage Friends Like This ...

At first sight, it seemed eminently sensible, since museums live in the past, that I as a feudal baron should see if we could dwell there and enjoy reflecting on and understanding the past together. It was a mistake of rather a tall order as it transpired. But it began sounding encouraging. At the time, the Heritage Museum had an Educational Services Officer who was intent on involving schools just as much as she could and bringing them on visits. With the baronies formally structured as The Baron Courts of Prestoungrange & Dolphinstoun, which were eventually to become a charity in 2002, we offered and it was gratefully accepted to commission a series of 10 Historical Booklets and linked Educational Aids. All the school teachers needed to do was swot up on the booklet, deploy the Guide and bring the children along. I vowed as one who had seen more than enough of

them, that we would not create one more series of educational resource packs that sat on shelves, although by golly we have!

The themes we chose looked at the housing of the grand and the workforce, at the working conditions, about the engineering problems, at the potteries, at the geology of the area that made mining feasible, at the farming undertaken, at the town's historic brewery and at the town's most famous pub, *The Gothenburg*. After a heated exchange with her boss who had returned after maternity leave to find the mice playing wildly thus, the Educational Services Officer upped sticks for Edinburgh Castle. We were stranded with resources but no insider to help get them used. But we were also in the process of falling out with the Museum in a bigger way.

Our feudalistic endeavours with the booklets were harmless enough but the Museum was of course in the guardianship of the East Lothian Council, a democratically elected body even though it too has overtones of feudalism in its managerial styles. Whoever said All Power Corrupts but Democracy Doesn't? The feeling was very quickly communicated that the right way forward for a baron would not be to arrange funding for those things that appealed to him and his nascent local team, but to seek and serve the wishes of the community as expressed by the Council and its Officers. And before this what was needed always, without exception, was a Feasibility Study. Without it any Council Officer was naked, and in any event it was always demanded by any Grant donors. *Pace* the last such study had envisioned a GoKart Track at the Heritage Museum.

But the tale really runs deeper still. Way back in the mists of time Prestongrange Industrial Museum had been designated the Scottish Mining Museum, very grand. But because in the 1960s its mine had been almost totally infilled and the surface nicely grassed over, when Newtongrange Colliery nearby closed it became the potential star attraction. In a tawdry compromise Prestongrange shared its title with Newtongrange and a Coal Trail linked the two as a tourist attraction. But that was overtaken by events when the Scottish Mining Museum Trustees won many millions from the National Lottery and transformed Newtongrange into a very fine museum with access to old coal faces. It was game set and match to Newtongrange and even the Coal Trail was lost in the mists of time until the Baron Courts dragged it back into the limelight in 2002 after a chance reading of the *Confessions of a County*

Planning Officer – not just any Planning Officer mind you, East Lothian's own.

So the challenge at the Heritage Museum was what on earth to do? Should it just be left as an elegant walking, exercise area, with its old Cornish Beam/Pump Engine as the star feature, or should something ambitious be attempted? It certainly was elegant including the in-filled Morison's Haven which had been the town harbour for four hundred years.

The Cornish Beam Engine is a very fine example of its kind and pumped millions of gallons of water from the mines over some 80 years or more. But the other buildings remaining are problematic. One does have great appeal for me however and the Baron Courts offered to restore it for use by the Scottish Tartans Society and the Baron Courts working together, of which more later. The offer was brusquely brushed aside. Worse still, it was deliberately but quietly removed from the List of Protected Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest. It was the old National Coal Board Bath House, constructed in the 1950s so that miners could have a bath after coming off shift on company time, using company soap and water. Per se the building is ugly, but it is absolutely 1950s and it stands for a great social victory for the miners – getting washed on company time, going home clean at the end of the day. Nice notion that.

It is in disrepair but it currently houses outback some 4 old coal mining steam engines, including the 100 year old Prestongrange. The local steamies as they are known get up steam in the summer once a month to the delight of the locals and visitors. It is one of the few active pursuits that seemingly went on at the Museum but that alas is being starved of resources to keep the engines in repair. An offer to adopt our namesake for the Baron Courts was ignored.

The remaining building is the shell and the chimney of the old continuous process brickworks that produced millions of bricks from local and imported clays throughout the 20th century. Each bears the name Prestongrange on it as do tiles that came from the Tile Presses. Our offers to cook a batch of Prestoungrange bricks as an attraction event and for sale, and to make new tiles, were both waved aside. Health and safety measures would be too stringent to undertake such a hazardous task.

Having exhausted all the existing buildings at the Museum as a possible focus for heritage collaboration, there seemed to be one

obvious avenue left. And that enthusiastic Scottish historian was right on my tail. Why not seek funding to rebuild a kiln so that local potters could both make limited edition reproductions of the former pottery ware and also attempt their own interpretation of what a 21st Century Prestongrange Pottery might have been producing. The funds were found, the plans for the kiln submitted to Planning Department but no response was ever forthcoming. Simply silence. And then a year later a letter clarifying that no activity whatever that was not under Council control would be permitted at the Heritage Museum by the Officer concerned. Although some of your ideas have merit we were gratuitously informed, do not take our support for granted for any of your initiatives. So we took our ball away and played elsewhere, where we are now urged to consult rather than act as the preferred way of living.

Graffito 114

Graffiti to Global Murals

It was my wife's long held wish that we should both attend Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* on an anniversary of the night in question. For many a long year I had found this task impossible to achieve, normally because I sought to book too late and many others were motivated by the same idea. My sister, a retired banker living in British Columbia, regarded the challenge as elementary and within a week had it solved. The destination was to be the Dinner Theatre at Chemainus, up country from Victoria on Vancouver Island. Little did we know what lay in store.

Chemainus is a saw mill town that some 25 years ago fell on hard times when its saw mill closed. Today its success story has been told in *The Smithsonian Magazine* for the world to read and a Global Association has been established amongst over 50 cities around the world that took the same approach when confronted with such an economic crisis. Under Karl Schutz leadership, who had worked previously in the mill, and with a lot of local support and opposition, they decided to paint murals on the walls of the town to tell its history and invite tourists to come take a look. In 2000 over 450 000 tourists came to take a look in a town with a population of 2500, and

the murals had grown to encompass a School of Theatre Arts and the dinner theatre I was scheduled to visit. Karl had got his original idea on a trip around Rumanian Monasteries and seeing the story of Christ and his Apostles painted on their walls.

Not only did we thoroughly enjoy the theatre but we also tracked down Karl, and promptly invited him to come and visit with us at Prestoungrange. He accepted and although very doubtful about receiving a contribution to his expenses in Scottish money which he had never heard of, he came within three months to take a look at our condition. He spoke elegantly and persuasively at Prestongrange House, which today houses the Royal and Ancient Musselburgh Golf Club, who made the premises available gratis.

Karl's most reassuring lesson was a soft one. It was not about how to choose the best paints for a seawall mural or how to make the lease/buy decision for scaffolding, or even the hassles to make sure copyright in the artwork was in the right hands. It was Beware the Nay Sayers. All over the world in every town he had had the good fortune to meet with there had been an issue of elected Council and its officials versus the Populist Will of the People. Its not Democrats versus Feudal Lairds. Its straightforward territory theory in action. Be not deterred in any way whatever by it, no matter what whosoever might hurl or throw or gently place in your way as obstacles. Get into action and start painting. Be sure to use great artists. Then people will get involved and the wagon will start to roll.

And so we did. Those under-utilised educational packages based on excellent research had unearthed all manner of pictures of life as it was, as well as the definitive version of the town's history. And fortunately my baronial lands include 400 metres of seawall where the first two appeared. We made the steps to the beach safe and placed a nice seat at the top for viewing. And the artists talked with passers by and gathered more memories and recorded them, even garnering in additional photographs. Emboldened we decided to step up from the beaches back into the Museum's space. No, it was not a desire to make mischief, it was just that that Bath House wall on the main road was an ideal spot for a mural. Yes, said the Planning Department; no said the Cultural Services Manager. So we painted it on the sea wall and using Photoshop software we have superimposed it on the Bath House as it would have been if it had have been. We think it looks rather fine and are resolved to ask the people of Prestonpans whether

they agree. But the Bath House initiative left a very nasty taste in our mouths because we had been deliberately misled for future murals around the town. In order to bring their location and depictions under their suzerainty they had counselled us to regard them as an Advertisement. As such we applied for Consent to Hang and both our new requests were rejected. Truth to tell the correct Regulation governing Memorials to our Ancestors in Prestoungrange states that that they are not to be defined as an advertisement; they are specifically excepted.

Within 18 months six murals have been created and much more besides. We found two murals from long ago around town, and statuary and sculptured works of art. A Pottery Competition has been run and won; a Photography Competition run and a Calendar for 2003 created; and *The Gothenburg* has been acquired for restoration to its 1908 standards and including a microbrewery that will once again produce some of the long lost ales that the town's miners had enjoyed for 200 or more years. This is a truly ambitious project but it stands on the threshold of the baronial foreshore close by the Murals Trail we have now begun to create. The Lord Mayor of Gothenburg's support has been enlisted with the reopening and it will become the Living Heritage Museum for Prestoungrange. In comparison with the potential for a resurgent Industrial Heritage Museum at the old mine, for which we all pray long and hard and often, our initiatives are and will remain modest but for us they are extremely ambitious. But they are intended to be catalytic. Funding is the challenge on a continuing basis and the quest for a business model that can sustain initiatives as Chemainus has found with its Dinner Theatre and School of Theatre Arts is vital. At *The Gothenburg* we are returning to the old principles from 1908, with only a 5% return on the investment and all surplus above that pledged to the charitable work. Furthermore, an old 1753 Impost of Tuppence per Pint of Ale drunk in the town will be urged upon all drinkers as they quaff fine beers in the years ahead.

The evidence is that what Chemainus and the Global Association, Moose Jaw in Saskatchewan, Ely Nevada, 29 Palms and Lindsay in California, Welland in Ontario, Bowen in Queensland, Mendooran in New South Wales, Sheffield in Tasmania and Kati Kati New Zealand, have all shown can be done is going to work for Prestoungrange and the town of Prestonpans. And a shame on Nay Sayers. If they

disapprove get up and do something better, but not a feasibility study please.

So walls are not for graffiti even if small egocentric volumes like this are. Walls are for telling out the history of a town that has fallen on hard times. It gives the town heightened self respect, gives it a perspective on its own future, honours the ancestors of the people still living there. No Council can hope to achieve this; only the people themselves can and they will clearly do so with the greatest enthusiasm. And if it is the local feudal baron who sets it going, good for him. He surely has a tale to tell not only about his baronial pedigree but about his own family in the area. Yes, I do. My mother was born close by in Musselburgh and my maternal grandfather worked as a miner here. For the Clerk at Lyon Court, that is enough said I am pleased to report.

Graffito 115

Tough Tartan Times

One of the uses we proposed for the Bath House was as a home for the Scottish Tartans Society, and thereby hangs a long long tale. It began when as the incoming baron I resolved to register a new tartan and to have sample cloths made up. The Lyon Court kindly put me in touch with the Society's Registrar and his wife, the Librarian. Our wish was expressed to create a new Prestoungrange and Dolphinstoun tartan design that captured that of my mother's own Park Sept of the MacDonalds but also the Kerrs, Morrisons and Grants that had gone before us in the barony. Several impressive designs were proffered and Dolphinstoun as the Clan's acknowledged art expert made his choice. A modest fee changed hands and A C Dalglish of Selkirk became our Appointed Supplier of The Tartan from that day forth.

My considerable interest in the matter had aroused a sleeping giant of tartantry, a man with the widest knowledge but one has to say with incoherent leadership skills akin to an old Highland Chief. But that judgement came later. I was impressed that a newly recognised Minor Baron should be worthy of his attention. He warned me of the

duplicitous nature of some of the goings on in his Society currently as well as past wickednesses and quite turned my head. With the initiatives that we were taking for the Baron Courts, and for *Burke's Landed Gentry in Scotland*, he felt I should join the Council and assist in achieving far greater glory for the Society in the years ahead. I loved the notion for two reasons. Firstly I have always enjoyed Society work when something needed turning around and I was hooked on the marketing significance of tartanry per se. Secondly, it was clear that in marketing the Scottish Landed Gentry's genealogy to the world a link on the Internet pages of the Tartans Society would be a powerful way to go.

And to my eternal shame, the master plan was conceived. The tartan activists who had first introduced me to the Society were to be locked out of their meagre facilities and the contents and files were to be transferred. My role in this escapade was to take charge of the library including the Register of All Known Tartans and to build the Society's WebSite.

It was a cold morning and my two colleagues and I arrived to play our part on time; our leader was an hour late accompanied by a mystery lady who we were supposed to acknowledge but never discuss again. The van and boxes, as arranged by our leader were even later arriving and insufficient. The van did not get to its destination on time and we had for our part to redetermine the right destination for our artefacts. In the end the artefacts arrived at the Baron Courts Hall at Cockenzie Centre where they remain at the time of writing.

We signed a transfer to our care and presented a Plan to the January Council meeting that was accepted. We were to build the WebSite and embed the links to Scotland's Landed Gentry therein in return for providing a range of services some for a fee and the balance gratis for the next five years. Those services included shelving and storage and fire protection and alarm systems for the artefacts which our leader claimed were worth a million pounds. Certainly in the past just one single artefact, Queen Victoria's portrait of Mr Brown, had been sold for a quarter of a million, and incidentally saved the Society from liquidation after a previous run of bad leadership so the story goes. We were subsequently asked to take the agreed Plan and turn it into a Formal Agreement, which we did in discussion with the Secretary to the Society. In the meantime, on the basis of the Plan and Council's acceptance we set to work with enthusiasm.

The problems began in truth when the leader turned up at Cockenzie with a shopping list for expensive shelves and an attitude that our staff there were mere serfs. Not alas our own particular style of working with a graduate workforce. There was pique and dressing downs and a whole ragbag of wholly unacceptable behaviour. The Formal Agreement was never discussed let alone signed by authority of the Council. So reluctantly I resolved to force the issue by personally requiring the Secretary as a Council Member to convene a Meeting with an Agenda that *did* include the Agreement. I arrived at the due time to find I was about to be ambushed. Our Secretary had gone AWOL, my Agenda had been thrown out and replaced by one not including the Agreement but rather our leader's personal report. He harangued me before a silent Council for 30 minutes and concluded by slamming his files closed with the remark: "That's the end of any Agreement". Not since I had presumed to move a detail from my Squadron Leader's control painting white lines to do something more worthwhile have I been so addressed and I remembered my old Sergeant's advice: say nothing and they'll dry up in the end. Council proceeded unanimously to dismiss any notion of an Agreement and then I was invited to fall on my sword and quit the Council, which I did.

The problem was ... my endeavours under the agreed Plan had incurred no end of expense including a special section in the forthcoming 19th edition of Scotland's Landed Gentry's genealogical reference work. The WebSite was up and running; the online searchable tartan database had been acquired and much more besides. Indeed, with the lease on premises to house the library and artefacts the investment based on synergy with the Landed Gentry had reached well over 100 000 pounds.

I had resigned as a Councillor but not as a Life Member of the Society. But I was illegally excluded from Notices of Meetings and illegally told I had been expelled as a Member by Council, which had never discussed the matter. So eventually against all my instincts I finally became litigious! It serves me right all right. Both the initial skirmishes and the subsequent dreariness of litigation where all sense of what the real issues are is lost, lawyers are continually taking holidays first ours then theirs, and promised time scales for compliance are extended at the stroke of a pen.

Today, we have the Society's (not really million pounds worth of)

artefacts and a horrendous expense outstanding and the Society is incapable of making any decision about what to do. Incredibly they decline to go to arbitration and prefer prevarication and delay and escalating legal expense. Meanwhile they try to catch up on their longstanding breaches of duties as a Charity to prepare proper accounts, and the Council holds its leader in quasi solitary confinement. But hush. It must be sub judice and I would not want to say anything here that might upset the majesty of the law as it proceeds at the pace of a horse drawn carriage over a ploughed field.

Graffito 116

Snooker Burns and Burkes

I have said before that my family put a watch on me at most gatherings to see how long it takes me to talk shop not family gossip. How they are unkind to me. You see my father died when I was just four and my idea of a father was an institution. Boarding school, the Royal Air Force, University, digs and then marital home. So I am sure any psychologist could reassure me. When it came to taking the kids out to kick a football around or whatever, well surely that was what their own school taught them. So I seriously missed out on a great deal of that stuff. I encouraged them to participate in institutional things like scouts and took them to church regularly; still go. I thoroughly enjoyed all church life at boarding school, the choir, the visits to sing at the newly built Guildford Cathedral, a Royal School of Church Music Summer School in Lincoln Cathedral with Gerald Knight as Choirmaster, and Lent, and the King James' bible. Oh how the New English jars.

We did holidays on canals together and they liked that because it meant as under 12s they could drive the 46' narrowboat and they did so very quickly with consummate skill I must add. That was a considerable success, in fact most holidays were. Guy Fawkes' Night each November 5th with bonfires and fireworks for the family at home were still politically correct then as well. Our bonfires always, at my behest, included too much autumn garden rubbish to be a blazing success but the fireworks went well. We finally gave up only when a whizzing helicopter contraption landed on my head and burnt a small patch. The

Northamptonshire Project in contrast was a resounding failure! We, or rather I, bought the county's Ordnance Survey map and sought to lead an exploration of all the intriguing places out and about. We found a magnificent mulberry tree at Canon's Ashby but not much more before it was disbanded by 3 votes – 1 as 'boring'.

There was much talk of a snooker room at home when the time came to reconstruct the double garage which had a nasty flat roof. We should never have perpetrated it in the first place when we renovated the Manor House in 1979 but the cost of anything finer was prohibitive then. Ten years later it seemed affordable and with a gable that fitted well with the rest of the 17th century house and dovecote we had ample room upstairs. We wrapped in the gardener's loo as we went, and as the construction went along installed a full sized snooker table above the cars. It will be tough to get it out again. We managed to get it off centre when the installers were there so the cue still hits the wall on the north side!

So then what? I had played snooker and billiards in my youth and our sons enjoyed it too. So as a good institutionaliser I decided we needed an Annual Trophy, and for 10 years we competed on my birthday weekend. It became the focus and our daughters in law joined the games. But as with all notions it had its lifecycle and with grandchildren with birthdays all around mine in December, and everyone living well away, it became too difficult to arrange. My wife and I could prioritise it but the new families did not! We only won once in the decade the engravings show. Yet of course they did not forget my sixtieth. They even gave me three parties just so that I would not forget it myself.

Snooker gave way to an annual celebration of Burns' Night as a family focus each January. Our attachment to the celebration did not arise from too great an understanding of the great man's work. Rather we were fortuitously invited to The Caledonian Club in London by a Scottish friend and his wife for his 50th birthday, and whilst it was not Burns it was the haggis. We took to organising the event at the Manor House for family and workplace and village friends, with crowds as big as a hundred. There were good singers who helped us all sing along with *Green Grow the Rushes*, *My Love is Like a Red Red Rose* and of course *Auld Lang Syne*. Julian, Baron of Dolphinstoun and I took to the habit of issuing selected poems to our guests which as the evening progressed they were expected to

read. We gave the same poems to several folk so that it became a team effort and a great device for social engineering. Avril was in charge of the haggis and neeps and tatties and guests brought the whisky. Most years a surplus accrued in the whisky department. But whilst we on occasion even imported the haggis from Scotland's best makers, the preparation of feedstock for a hundred or more is a major endeavour and the one indoors in charge grew weary of the task. Indeed one late Burns' Night cried "Enough".

From that year on Burns' Night has been somewhere else. One memorable year saw just a dozen of us take to the Orient Express' *Northern Belle* for a trip from Manchester Victoria station to North Wales and back after dark, eating haggis and listening to a New Orleans Jazz selection. Its organisers approach to the Night was no poetry, no Burns' songs, a single piper for the haggis, a line from the Ode thereto and far too much whisky. But we all bedecked in our fine tartanry and regalia.

But the big Burns Night is yet to be. The Chemainus Mural Town having granted me their Key, has become the venue for the grandest of all events in 2003. The town's Festival Theatre and its dining rooms with an extant Scottish chef have joined with us under the guidance of a Canadian Welsh diplomat and actor, to invite upwards of 300 to celebrate. With snow on the Malahat last year it could be a slippery ride up there from Victoria, but with a full street procession of pipers from the local Scottish Regiment that will be speedily accomplished.

And finally then, to family genealogy. All my involvement since 1963 with publishing meant I was unable to resist the challenge to form a team to republish *Burke's Landed Gentry: The Kingdom in Scotland*. The peripheral bonus was that our family's genealogy would be included as of right as a Scottish baron. So the search had to go on in earnest to gather the records. My sister had begun the work as a hobby five years earlier whilst aunts but not uncles were still available with good memories; but the rest was scholarship or should one say hard graft. The Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages had not yet been made available on the Internet (even when it was of course it collapsed under the strain for a year or so).

This initial interest in Scotland's Landed Families soon spread across to *Burke's Peerage & Baronetage* and we were charged with creating its 107th Edition for October 2003. As a project both this and the earlier Scottish volume were monumentally uneconomic in

conventional terms. It was for this reason that no editions were published between 1970 and 1999. But we believed in the team, and still do, that the Internet is an ideal vehicle for making the genealogical databases which *Burke's* really is more widely available. And so it has proved, most particularly in the USA and in far flung areas of the world where our ancestors emigrated to find a new life or to improve upon the life they already knew well.

Our Website today is wondrous. It includes not only the 107th Edition of *The Peerage* and 19th Edition of *Scotland's Landed Gentry*, some with traced ancestors back to the 12th/13th centuries. It also features all the earlier data scanned magnificently for us in India giving the records from Ireland, from those who went to the USA and from England and Wales as well. From those living today, we have also once again embraced Knights of the Realm who have been omitted since the 1950s. We have future plans for the Orders of Canada and Australia. Genealogy is demonstrably one of the fastest growing hobbies on the Internet, with almost as many user hits as the Sex Segments, but there are no sour grapes about that for, as genealogists the world over will tell you, sex has to come first for genealogy to happen.

So from narrowboats and snooker family life flowed on to Burns' Night and ultimately a series of entries in an online database. But now there are grandchildren are we wiser? Are we ever wiser?

Graffito 117

Writings for the Decade

It has to be true that I have written less in the final one sixth of my working life than in the other five sixths. In most of the subject areas where I was so prolific in the 60s and 70s, and so deeply involved as a publisher, I no longer have anything (much) to say. In fact I decry the loss of the explorer's excitement that was associated with the years when the major fields of management were first blossoming as disciplines and as professions. But there have been magnificently redeeming 'other' aspects to enjoy, such as learning processes in general and as focussed in my own enterprises; and of course there has been a most spectacular paradigm shift over the past decade.

As has been described even analysed earlier in this volume, my total commitment to action learning processes was deepened throughout the period 1988 to 1995, and my most significant generic contribution for my fellow travelling in-group was entitled '*Your Enterprise School of Management*'. The emphasis was on 'your'. But there was also a very great deal of chronicling of action learning programmes that addressed both the common workplace and the paradigm shift that confronted us – which was the shift both in education and in publishing from paper based services and products to web-based resourcing. But I primarily captured our combined generic experiences as they happened to us all from 1995 to 1999 in a second significant book entitled *e-Postcards from the Other Side*.

The 'Your' book is for a marketer little more than an extension of the notion of customer orientation to the field of education. Not only should the location and the learning approach be customer friendly but the curriculum should be customer authorised even derived. This line of thinking reached post-Revansian dimensions as more and more colleagues at MCB University Press and in IMCB joined programmes. I too undertook my own M Sc with colleagues.

Literati Club at MCB University Press was a particular outgrowth of Marketing Clubs and database marketing initiatives. In *Engendering Democratic Action*, an anthology published in 1997, colleagues helped report ground breaking contributions in marketing intelligence about readers and librarians, in the design of global support services for new/young authors, in transformations of the reviewing systems and the editorial processes for creating Special Issues on given themes. The transformation of the total publishing logistics process from author to reader was also modelled for the first time and guided the investments made in creating MCB University Press' state of the art EMERALD Insights technology, ahead of all other publishing houses in the world.

Quality management not in abstract or for others, but for our own operating and learning systems, was also a major focus for writing. ISO 9002 was used as the reference point but of course it was only a starting point. With colleagues, two collections of papers appeared in the late 1990s also debating both the Virtual University and the Virtual Learning Organisation. These included once again ground breaking academic and professional contributions.

It is true however that it was and still is the 'Your' book that is most frequently cited. And its origins are worth recalling here to see just why that is the case and yet how surprised most of us have been that it should be so. For what was said in the 'Your' book had for so long been so obvious to us all in IMCB. Its contribution was I suppose to become a Manifesto. Colleagues asked me to attempt to delineate What Next in 1992. I built it around the simple Proposition *We Learn Best At Work*. Once that proposition was accepted as the basis for creative learning design, colleges and Business Schools became no more than sub-contractors working to specifications. Like any good contractors they had a role to play in helping to flesh out the specification but not to pre-empt it, which was of course the norm. The balance of the book asserted in polemical style that (i) Questions are the Curriculum; (ii) Enterprises already had Learnt Systems; (iii) That Learning SWOTs should be Conducted; (iv) That Learning should be Actionable; (v) That the Expert Phoenix was expected of the Universities; and (vi) That Dreamtime is Reality.

From these six segments three caught on best. Firstly, Questions are the Curriculum led eventually to a whole new raft of amendments to Ordinances and Regulations encouraging Associates to 'Pose, Debate, Agree and then to Answer 12 Questions'. The notion of Actionable Learning brought early derision from lawyers and would be lawyers, suggesting we had stolen their dialect. But it was a well struck choice. It caught on. No more 'So What' essays. Thirdly, Dreamtime is Reality which of course derived for me from the aboriginal constructs of Dreamtime in Australia. Dreamtime captures the stories from the past as well as creating a powerful vision for the future. I wanted my colleagues to recall and accept that BBS (before Business Schools) all managers learnt at work, and how they did it well or badly. But I also wanted them all to think on a grand scale. What Revans and we and many more had pioneered was due to arrive big time. And as I have shown elsewhere with the arrival of the Internet and the frustrations of corporations leading to the creation of their own Corporate Universities, it has. The design in the 'Your' book of the Enterprise School of Management *is* the design of a Corporate university.

I said earlier that *e-Postcards from the Other Side* was a significant book. I believe it was not because it showed any great wisdom but because it was a learning log as we lived during the dot.com

revolution. I unashamedly used the Graffiti model with some 40 e-postcards back and forth from Internetica whence our adventurers had gone on sabbatical leave. It compared most of the work with construction in Taiwan, dealt with the wondrous new productivities and the horrendous challenges of printed paper baggage dressed as quality standards, found doubting Thomas at almost every turn of the way, pondered the extraordinary nature of the teams of youngsters who came together to make 'it' happen. It was released on the Internet instalment by instalment so its immediacy is now lost. What we have instead is some contemporary anthropology in the best traditions of Ruth Benedict with participant observation. What it needs of course to round it out is *Where Are They Now – The Sequel*. There's a thought, for on a fragmentary basis I know many many of these supercharged youngsters have now made their ways forward talking up their early accomplishments, even at the age of 30 something getting nostalgic about it all.

My most recent writing (this volume apart, which has been a full year under construction due to myriad distractions), has been wholly tangential to my professional and academic career, but exhilarating. For the first time for longer than I care to remember I found myself doing fundamental scholarly research. And I found again the pleasure of chasing a wild lead and finding it got me everywhere. The work is a modest 100 page history of *The Prestoungrange Gothenburg*, the temperance pub that I am now seeking to restore in Prestonpans. All the locals associated it because of its name with all the other neighbouring Goths. But starting from the list of founding directors and the original 1901 Prospectus to raise funds, then heading for *Burke's Landed Gentry: The Kingdom in Scotland* to study the genealogy of those founders revealed a very great deal. Two served in the same regiment in the 1st World War; one was the heir to one of Scotland's greatest publishing houses (indeed he put up all the funds as a loan) but alas died in that war. Another had been at work well before our particular initiative in Fyfe's coalfields and was later knighted. One went on to become Governor General of Australia and Secretary of State for Scotland, and was still around in 1930 to fulfil any researcher's dream outcome. He was tucked away in the Minutes of Evidence to the Royal Commission on Licensing in Scotland, that we traced in the Bodleian in Oxford after much effort, reminiscing about his times in that original enterprise from 1901. So the evidence wholly belied the myth. Prestonpans had not triggered their local Goth; it had been a do-

gooders team from Edinburgh and thereabouts, and what is more by 1919 they had sold out to the English!

Graffito 118

Spin Out or Fade Out

I have had colleagues who simply announced that they were withdrawing from some endeavour, and then walked straight out on all responsibility towards any work-in-progress left behind. And there have been others who gladden my heart and win my lifelong respect who do quite the opposite. They make true sacrifices of time and money quite often to see through responsibilities they have assumed. They do not find alibis in others for their own behaviour. They just have a sense of old fashioned duty. So do I, and I hope I can live up to the exemplars I have witnessed from time to time.

Shelf Life Notice at Graffiti 105 above was the opposite of a wake up call for me; it was a spin out, fade out message. How could I responsibly pass the baton? What literature was there to illuminate my path along that road? Surely, indeed obviously, many have gone that way before. In fact the experience must be almost universal unless a sudden death intervenes. But of course I was a devotee of action learning so the only way out was forward with Questions for Myself as the Curriculum.

I have consistently opted for spin out as the requisite model for fade out. And my colleagues have been my worst enemies as I seek to travel that route. As a lifelong activist, innovator, iconoclast and entrepreneur my natural tendency is to get involved. To be actively seeking not to be involved and to get others to take up the slack, inevitably required team development. The balance of the team assumed I was still in an active, innovative etc. role. Five years after the process had been triggered two close colleagues writing their organisational analyses on IMCB in England offered the opinion that in the future there was a possible challenge as and when I actually did take on more of a mentoring and less of an executive role! So much for my own illusions.

I wondered what it was that made those two colleagues think I was not already fading gracefully. Had they not seen my swashbuckling self in my

heyday, say when I was under 60 or even 50? I concluded perhaps too speedily that it could be the scope of my grasp of the details, and the history, and the issues which was integral to any entrepreneur. It could be my frequent boasts that Faculty seem to have lost their capacity for inventiveness of new tricks to give the administrators a hard time, the old ones keep coming around and around. Worst of all it could be that I say, well we did try that probably before you were born and it didn't work then (yes, I am ashamed that I really once said that!).

My own vision of what I think should be happening is rather akin to my work with great doctoral Associates. Before too long they outpace my knowledge of a subject and I am left being asked for guidance arising from acquired political nous, a quasi mentoring role. My most senior colleague believes in spontaneous flattery as the way to my heart, and regularly describes me as his mentor. But what an awesome responsibility that truly is, to be a mentor. All I seem able to bring to bear is advice from yesterday. Call it wisdom if you wish to flatter but it lacks zest, it lacks the commitment that arises from responsibility for seeing things through, or at least it does for me. It is in a couple of words, intensely frustrating. If only

So if fading is mentoring, if asked, spin out seems to be the way to go. Here the baton of creativity and responsibility truly passes to another individual or team. The *only* interest left is the bottom line or some measure of outcome. It's a Box Jenkins, black box approach to life or at least to older age. But that is quite horrendous, simply looking at outcomes without caring or being able to care how they are constructed or nurtured.

I am reliably informed that old age has its own reward. Old age, I hear, will actually dim the curiosity and heighten the critique we offer of the wicked changes in today's world that we shall decry. As a neighbour lately remarked, we can all become whingers. The analogy I am offered is with my own attempts at maintaining my lifelong commitment to running (note not a commitment to 'jogging' although my current velocity is probably exceeded by many joggers). At a BUPA medical check up 15 years ago I asked when should I give up my running, and the best answer the highly qualified, and expensive, adviser could give me was: you'll know when the time comes! And that, after 7 years professional training, continuing professional development every year, and enough competence and skill to conduct major surgery on my body, was it.

The doctor concerned might have been expensive but on reflection he seems to have been wise. Don't worry about it at all. Don't get obsessed with spin out or fade away. Time takes care of it and us all. We slow down, others overtake us, accelerate and we lose sight of them ultimately. It is a natural cycle. The un-natural thing is to turn it into a managed cycle, with terrifying moments of truth like The Sack/Downsizing or Retirement with a watch or is it a new PC these days.

Which is almost the complete opposite of the conclusion reached by a recent Doctoral Graduate of the Year in IMCA who researched Social Gerontology. We all need one of those Plans again, we may not treat it as an Issue as we go along. It is almost as if we must turn ourselves into actuaries making the right calculations for playing an end game. With the escalation in house values in these times, and tax burdens to prevent much serious saving or pension accumulation, that decision to trade in one's home almost as soon as the mortgage is paid off for an annuity rather than a 40% UK taxed inheritance for the family is going to make actuaries of all of us. Unless of course we look at the new fangled imagination of realtors who ask why anyone ever bothers to buy all of their home at all. Just buy as much as you can and spend whatever that amounts to

To plan or to let it happen? To mentor or to see that as encouraging dependency rather than facilitating tomorrow's world? To be a true existentialist or some degree of the opposite? These are profound questions that we have no time to answer when we are hectically at work and no need to answer as we spin out or fade out. After all, who cares. It must be such a result that takes so many of us to a golf course (even at a tender age) or into the garden to talk to the flowers or the trees. Or to find time to attend and work for a church or voluntary/charitable institution. A colleague just recently told me she was taking meals around on wheels to older folk, who did not really want the meal and certainly not if it had peas on it; what they wanted was a chat, but she could not spare the time for that. She had too many peas to deliver!

Perhaps for me it will be the flowers and the garden. Without realising the profound implications of my behaviour I have after all been taking their photographs throughout the decade!

Pasts Presence and Futures

I want to take a genuine backward look at events and people that have shaped my thinking and sometimes my working life, and in doing so implicitly exonerate all my family – which is fortunate for them because thirty seven years of growing along with my wife and somewhat shorter period with two of my sons has been more than a brutal education.

My first managerial awareness was at school aged 17 where my Headmaster once congratulated me for being a “good organiser”. He also, on one memorable occasion when my organising ability was getting carried away with itself, informed me that what he said to me was “only a suggestion but don’t forget who’s making it”. When he wrote to me 45 years later with a Round Robin request for a donation to the school to help create a new Arts and Music facility, I could not resist reminding him I had never forgotten that dictum as I sent in my cheque for the not inconsiderable amount he had stipulated, or should I say suggested! Actually there was an earlier magisterial message from the 2nd World War evacuation days I spent in Totnes in Devon: “Englishmen do Not Chew Gum”. This for me was a more subtle message to carry through life, even though my mother was a Scot. There were significant differentiators amongst folk, that cannot and should not be ignored. If you wanted to be Type A behave like Type A. Do/don’t chew gum. It was of course Americans who were over paid, over sexed and over here that were Type B. With the increasing viewing of movies and TV and holiday travel there are times when it is hard to know whether one is or wants to be a given Type of course, but to thyself be true has always been the more comfortable place to be for a good night’s sleep. Even if its not always cheaper than Horlicks, Ovaltine or even a Glenkinchie nightcap.

My Royal Air Force days were indeed an age away, but there were two memorable guides for me at that time. The first arose from my Squadron Leader’s indignant annoyance with me when I distracted some aircraftsmen from a wholly derisory and menial task to one somewhat less so. His response was in today’s world pathetic managerially, but equally my behaviour was insubordination. Ever since then I have spent a great deal of time keeping my bosses in the picture. No surprises for the boss! The other guidance came from my Sergeant, the individual who in theory I was commissioned to

command but who politely showed me how to run our show his way. Sergeant Darby it was, and ever since I have the greatest respect and identification with colleagues who do likewise to me. In fact it is so pleasant and agreeable to be gently but obviously wisely told what to do and how to do it by one with no end of experience. Not a crass parody of 'Yes Minister' but street intelligence. I often wonder how he achieved his leadership of myself. I seem to recall he was strong into ... "its only a suggestion, Sir," too.

After National Service I went to Reading, leaving with my Bachelor degree in Political Economy. It took me to ICI and there I remember being appalled at counselling that suggested I wait until the boss moved on before I moved on. I moved on elsewhere to a boss who advised me to get out of marketing research into marketing because I was more interested in using data than collecting and collating it. True indeed. And the move brought me into contact with my wife, so a double bonus. My night school tutor at Slough Tech told me with gravitas that my literary style was too flowery. His was none too good either! But my boss at Bradford told me how to get a career in a university: "Write", he said. So I did; and he and I together. And he was right; it worked and I got a career in the university world. But it went stale as, just as in marketing research before, I found I wanted to see managers manage not analyse and evaluate them all the time. But my peers disagreed until I met the Vice Chancellor of Queensland University in Australia who said: "Gordon, you've got some hard choices to make! Why not come and join us in Brisbane at St Lucia. I'm Northern Irish and I can take it so you can too!" But I stayed and wove the patterns of IMCA and MCB University Press with my colleagues although I did lend a hand in Queensland. And I do not regret it either. Magical place to retreat is Australia, but I greatly love Great Britain – except for its politics and its litter and its dependency culture. I like its seasons too. My brushes in Australia with a hot Christmas reinforce the view. Far better to have Christmas as the major celebration as the seasons change and reach their ultimate depths of winter. Christmas then brings a sparkle to life that adornments on palm trees simply cannot do for me. Only yesterday in Vanuatu a true Australian on holiday there told me that for him Christmas is one more prawn barbie on the beach with some tinnies. Several of life's unsung heroes simply, or seemingly with consummate ease, labour in the vineyards of life. They have roles in organizations

which Creator Innovators/Assessor Developers and Thruster/Organisers barely recognise. For me they chase up loose ends and half thought through ideas. They Report/Advise and Uphold/Maintain. They meet deadlines with a thoroughness that leaves them taken for granted a million times. They come from Alice Springs and Harrow on the Hill, they come from Toronto and Guernsey, they come from Prestonpans, Vila and Bradford. They sometimes think I do not notice, but they are usually mistaken. I have always and will always want to share with them what for me is the big picture than in fact conditions their roles in a thousand ways. Never quite sure whether they relish their briefings, but I both want to do it and believe its important that I should. I always want to believe that colleagues flourish and enjoy their lives at work if the bigger picture is shared. I feel I should share my enthusiasms and hopes.

For the future I am searching for a Fairy Godmother. I have all manner of colleagues who have helped me immeasurably over the years and to whom I shall be eternally grateful. But like my Country Gentlemen most of them did so to urge me on, or rather that was how I took their help on board. What I seek nowadays is a Fairy Godmother who will take away some of my concerns. I do not mean anxieties, I mean proper concerns. Concerns that I believe I properly feel for colleagues futures, for staff pension fund payouts, for career development and simple pleasure out of the way we all work together. The role could be played by a financial engineer, but do they have souls? I have learnt to understand bankers from my older brother and my sister both of whom had distinguished and successful working lives as such. But my brushes with merchant bankers and financial engineers have left me wounded, harmed, jaundiced. They are not Marxists, they are simply capitalists per se; and I have lived my life doing things I felt helped the human condition in a direct manner rather than through a quaternary industrial process.

May I always be spared from s/he who does not believe in what they are doing. That was one of the great compliments I recall being paid by the late Rob Hermans, who was a marketing genius with few equals and a longtime corporate and personal client at IMCA: "What a pleasure to meet a salesman who believes in his product!"

Forth Whatever Next

My first draft of Graffito 120 was a tad sentimental, even nostalgic. Was this truly the last graffito I was ever going to write? After all, following a moment of fine glory as the colonial flag was lowered in Hong Kong in 1997, Her Majesty's Royal Yacht *Britannia* is now no more than a (just) floating museum piece at Leith, not far up the Firth of Forth from my Scottish barony's lands. Perhaps keeping my own modest distance 12 miles downstream, with my ancestral Morison's Haven in-filled anyway, I too could join the museum world. But I already detect a none too subtle resentment at my posing as a museum piece. Living history is a better slogan for me to espouse. And so I shall. And there shall of course be more graffiti if, nay when, there are things I have observed or learnt and want to write down in the pious hope others might find them engaging, even helpful.

What happened from the ancestral barons' in-filled Morison's Haven was that ships sailed, later even steamed, forth. They went across to Europe and they certainly tied up in Gothenburg once in a while. But I hesitate to suggest they were an early manifestation of globalisation, one of today's phenomena that can generate a great deal of heat yet little light. Gothenburg was recently the scene of ugly riots purporting to address the theme when the EU Heads of government held their six monthly meeting there. Truth to tell I have always been a Gaullist, ever since my earliest days as The European Sherbourne Scholar at Reading University in 1960/1961. Charles de Gaulle was of course one of the exceptional leaders of the Churchillian era although he long out served Churchill into the 1960s. de Gaulle was French first and a strong European second. He believed the only intelligent and viable way forward was L'Europe des Patries, not a bizarre union pretending to submerge two thousand and more years of history. He ejected NATO from France to Brussels but still France remained within the EEC as it then was. Economic growth and interdependence were and remain amongst the most stalwart opponents of warfare and conflict. Unemployment and envy are amongst the strongest drivers to warfare.

I mentioned globalisation, incidentally, because the final graffito in both early volumes alluded to things outwith the UK. #40 focussed

on *Crème Caramel* I had enjoyed around the globe and #80 *Think Multinational*. Theme 40 was that comparison was and remains for me one of the most powerful weapons in the armoury of the researcher and the scholar although it is much neglected in favour of grand theory formulation based on puny samples or data sets. Theme 80 argued that we simply had to go multinational to escape the frustrations of single state cartelisation. Both themes have been honoured and exemplified in the past 25 years beyond any shadow of doubt. Yet still we have not globalised how we work. We have had no need to impose a single global view on everyone else. Rather we have concurred with de Gaulle: *Vive la Difference*. It is the differences not the similarities that enrich our lives and for us have made things possible. Certainly there have been frustrating moments when colleagues from one culture ‘wished’ the rest of us would behave as they did; and then as they travelled to our graduation ceremonies and annual congresses they began to appreciate the variety. Travel not only broadened their minds, and mine of course; it made them want to understand and learn from the variety.

The variety encompasses far more than matters affected by climate or religion. It most stridently reflects stages of economic and political development. In one country a revered colleague in our Court of Honorary Members, elected there at his subsequent accuser’s behest, is in jail and seemingly a disgraced Minister, brought down by procedures that not even Murdoch as media baron in extremis would have contemplated. Elsewhere, in Singapore under and after LKY (a style of political economy that offended western protocols about the press) has carried a small island state to international greatness and acclaim. In Hong Kong we have witnessed the passing of an extraordinary, misguided, even pretentious final era led by Chris Patten as Britain’s last Governor into One Nation Two Systems within the PRC. Although scarcely involved with it, we have seen the overthrow of a to us offensive regime in Afghanistan and its replacement by a brave coalition seeking to address western models of life in a markedly unfavourable context. In the countries of Africa where we have worked we have seen the collapse of legacy models of government to such an extent that many are left speechless about how to help stimulate wellbeing even health care. Yet each of these situations has found its own situational leadership and its own distinctive outcome. Each had exemplified the crassness of seeking a globalised pattern or answer that is good for all at this time.

So if it is all so apparent, the meaninglessness of globalisation in the areas where we have worked, who are the globalisers? Surely we are not focussing on Theodore Levitt's obsession in the 1980s on global brands such as Coca Cola and Macdonalds? Even they we now know have stared their declining scope for an export trade in the face. Surely we are not talking about exports that capture the interest of a widespread market outside the originating country. What is truly feared seems to be the power of multinational, as opposed to national, enterprises to use their muscle to determine in which country R&D will be done for medical science or software development. Global companies are for ever playing games with tax minimisation strategies, low labour cost procurement, least costly environmentally friendly regulations and labour/employment laws covering holidays, maternity and paternity leaves, child allowances and a million other elements. But it is not a phenomenon created by global companies. It is a disease if that is how one sees it of us all. We take holidays in countries across the world where their currency affords a favourable rate of exchange; and we shop in our malls and superstores where the prices are kindest to our pockets. The theory and the practice of international trade in economics has long suggested that these behaviours are functional. It is the barriers to trade that distort the natural movement to equalisation of opportunity. Such barriers keep me eating French Golden not-very-Delicious apples in the UK when a larger quota for New Zealand or Tasmania would be a greatly preferable way to amuse and delight my taste buds. It is good that GATT and the WTO are striving yet again to accomplish a new round of tariff and quota reductions.

And so I put down my pen with a promise to vote 'Yes' to a common currency in Europe (when invited by the Parliament to express my view). I have no reason to change my strategic belief arrived at in 1976. And it will be 'Yes' for the expansion of member countries to include an ever larger population, in a Gaullist Europe des Patries. If the People's Republic of China can survive even flourish with the extremes of its Two Systems, I have no doubt whatever that we can survive in Europe with the complexities of 15 and many more Systems within One Union. And if the USA and Canada can be contented members of a post-Cold War NATO, they can apply to join too. After all many, if not all, their peoples are of European descent. They made their protest. 1776 and a repatriated Canadian constitution not withstanding, lets reunite. Mexico, Central and South America will surely be welcome too.

But even though my pen is down, my email is online all the while. Now there's a global imperative for you. No two names and addresses the same anywhere in the world or the system cannot work. Instant communication and feedback. And our voice patterns are unique as well such that satellite communications can find us each time we open our mouths to speak.

